At Opposite Sides of the Cafeteria

By Segregating Themselves, LN Students Diminish their Ability to Understand Others

Christina Pilsbury
Opinion Editor

Segregation is still alive across the nation, in the community, and at Loy Norrix. Regardless of what post-Jim Crow laws require, people naturally segregate themselves by race in their social groups. Whether consciously or subconsciously, we all make decisions about our friends based on our levels of comfort with their interests, abilities, weaknesses, differences from us, and their culture. However, when race becomes the determinant factor in these decisions, we limit our ability to understand each other.

When you walk into the LN cafeteria during lunch, you see tables full of students of predominately one race clustered together. Although there are exceptions, most students are surrounded by friends of their own races. Government teacher Niambe McMillon attributes this to students' home lives.

"The cafeteria is one of the most segregated areas of the school and it's sad...there's something in their personal lives that makes students feel like they have to go to opposite sides," said McMillon.

It is human nature to want to be around people of similar culture and people who are like us; it does not make us bad people. It is, however, wrong to assume that people who look like us racially are like us. While many cultural behaviors may seem to go hand in hand with a person's race, many other factors play a role in defining a person's culture and behavior. LN government teacher Art Williams agrees that it's easy to assume that all people of one race act a certain way, but that it's an incorrect assumption.

"Unfortunately, at LN, it can appear hard to separate race from behavior, but it unfairly pins a certain behavior on all [people] of that race," said Williams.

If we don't limit our discussions and friendships to those of the same race as our own, we could gain a larger understanding of our own worlds, and the world as a whole. It is important to think about what we can gain from another point of view, and why we feel comfortable around our own friends.

An unfortunate result of segregation is the reinforcement of stereotypes. If students have little contact with other races outside of school, they can only base their assumptions on what they observe from afar at school. If students see one group of students of one race acting in a certain manner, they may assume that all people of that race behave in that manner, whether this is positive or negative behavior.

Unfortunately, according to Williams, by his own observations, the racial gap has only widened in the ten years he's been at LN. This only strengthens stereotypes that students hold about others, stereotypes that they will carry outside of high school.

Some students at Loy Norrix come from elementary and middle schools and neighborhoods of many different races. But students also come from neighborhoods or other schools where one race is in a large majority. Loy Norrix, however, has representation from many different cultures and races.

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Is it the responsibility of the public school system to ensure social integration? Despite the diverse population, many Loy Norrix students are not learning how to interact with other cultures, they are simply engaging with others of their own race and culture and learning to separate themselves. The proof is in the cafeteria, and the weekend activities where races are separated.

The role of the public schools creates a heated debate in the public forum. Some say that the schools should teach the state approved curriculum, and that is all. Others contend that public schools should feed, counsel, console, and parent. McMillon believes that no matter what the schools do, what students learn at home cannot be overridden.

"You can't deprogram how people were raised the first 16 years of life," said McMillon.

Nancy Mollhagen, art teacher at LN, believes that the public schools are already doing so many other things, and it's now expected that the schools will try to encourage integration.

"If you want the schools to do what the families should already be doing, then yes, integration needs to be a focus... where do you draw the line?" said Mollhagen.

Students are expected to take away lessons about life from school. What more can we teach students than how to interact with differing perspectives and backgrounds? You'd be hard pressed to find an issue in which you wouldn't benefit from another perspective.

Race is an issue that will most likely be prominent for a long time, and we may never be completely comfortable with talking about it, but if we concentrate only on being politically correct, and trying not offend anyone, how can we solve any issues? Even under the most careful wording, no matter how hard you try, when discussing race, you may still offend someone. Segregation is a problem in the schools, but if public discussion of race is not initiated, how can issues be solved?

When a survey was distributed at Loy Norrix, asking students if their own race is represented in their friends, families and neighbors, students were reluctant to answer; students felt like they would be labeled racist if they answered "yes." What does this demonstrate about the subject of race? Because it is touchy, should we just ignore it? Instead of accusing ourselves and others of racism, discussion should be encouraged. Williams believes that the problem with discussing race is that it will never go away.

"The problem with race is that it's so visible, you can't get away from it; this school, our society, we're moving towards Us vs. Them," said Williams.

Segregation still does exist as a major issue at Loy Norrix. By subconsciously limiting ourselves to one race of friends, we sacrifice everything there is to be gained from another culture. Our scope of understanding is narrowed when we only view life from our own perspective. Yes, we may study the plights of people of diverse races and cultures in history class, but until we break bread with someone who is of a different culture, we cannot understand. In an idealistic world, we would celebrate and embrace our racial differences instead of using them to separate us, and according to Williams, this day is not likely to come.

Said Williams, "Until we blend to the point where we all look alike, our differences will continue to divide us and identify us."

Bad Publicity Equals Good Publicity

Celebrities Gone Bad, While Their Careers Reach New Heights

Angelo Murray
Photo Editor

When I think of celebrities, I think of media forms, musicians, actors and athletes alike. Basically a public figure, someone is who is always in the public for doing their best work. Most public figures work hard to achieve their status. In many cases, the American dream is to be rich and famous. That means that at a young age people are moving out of their hometowns and are moving to California or New York, spending thousands of dollars on classes, working out to the extreme, going on countless auditions, meeting with movie producers and getting their dreams crushed. Then they do it over and over for the same results, no matter what happens to keep pursuing their dreams.

Now, that is hard work, but it seems that to be a celebrity, you have to be young, hot and rich and you don't even have to have talent. However, if you want your 15 minutes of fame, you have to do something to get noticed, or become a socialite. A socialite is someone who knows A-listers, where the hottest party is and where to be seen. Really to make it big in Hollywood, you have to know somebody to be somebody.

"I'm rich (yeah I'm rich) I can do whatever", is a quote from Bow Wow's smash hit "Freshazimiz". Why do celebrities take their fame for granted? They think because they are huge stars they can get away with inappropriate behavior. They are wrong! Celebrities are praised for their wrongdoings daily, because America finds their own sad and mischievous behavior a joy and entertainment.

Some celebrities find their own wrongdoings entertaining as well. Take for example reality star, former Guess model and son of Olympic decathlon champion Bruce Jenner, Brody Jenner. Brody Jenner had a short-lived reality show, "Princes of Malibu" which portrayed Brody and his brother performing crazy stunts while on a permanent vacation. Brody went on to appear on other reality shows, such as "Laguna Beach: The Real Orange County." He feuded with childhood friend, Spencer Pratt and Pratt's girlfriend Heidi Montag and now has a close friendship with Lauren Conrad on the series, "The Hills".

Another show that portrays celebrities abusing their position is "Jackass". Unlike "Princes of Malibu", "Jackass" is a success. It shows Steve-O and the gang doing dangerous and self-injuring pranks. The show lasted three seasons in 2000-2002, and had two highly successful movies.

Reality set in for Steve-O when he was arrested in Los Angeles, California in 2002 for obscenity and assault. This is one of many of his arrests. In 2003 while in Sweden, he admitted in an interview that he swallowed a condom filled with cannabis (weed) to get past cops. He was arrested on May 23, 2003, but was released on May 27 after paying 45,000 Kronor (currency of Sweden), about $6,700. Steve-O also been arrested for disorderly conduct when he urinated on a red carpet at The Academy Awards and stripped down nude. He also underwent investigations for being caught exiting a Los Angeles nightclub with marijuana. He also had a conflict with Wu-Tang Clan member Raekwon. At an Ol' Dirty Bastard tribute concert, Steve-O claimed to have shared cells with O.D.B. After that Steve-O stripped nude and hit a backflip. Raekwon was furious at Steve-O that he would do such a thing and threatened him. After all of his poorly made desicions, Steve-O is still a fan favorite. His brave stunts helped him land a new T.V. show, "Dr. Steve-O."

> "I'm rich (yeah I'm rich) I can do whatever"
> -Bow Wow

It's not just the male figures that do bad things. More recently, it has been females. They are getting arrested for D.U.I's and partying till dawn. The trend has been called, "the good girls gone bad."

Lindsay Lohan model recording artist, actress and, more famous "Party Girl," is a nightlife notable. In 2005 alone she had three car accidents. In summer 2007 Lohan lost control of her Mercedes Benz. The police found a significant amount of cocaine in her car and she was later charged with a misdemeanor and driving under the influence. She then entered a rehab center in Malibu, CA two days later, where she stayed for 45 days.

July 24, 07, Lohan car chased the mother of her personal assistance over an argument. At a police station in Los Angeles, CA cops figured her blood alcohol level was above the CA maximum 0.08. They also found a small amount of cocaine in her pocket. Lohan was booked on felony charges of possession of cocaine and transportation of a narcotic and misdemeanor charges of D.U.I and driving with a suspended license. Lohan was released on $25,000 bail. Lohan was ordered to serve one day in jail, 10 days worth community service and 3 years of probation. After her arrest Lohan checked back into rehab, she checked out on Oct. 5, 07. Lohan recently has been doing community service for America Red Cross and is starting work on her upcoming album.

The celebrities bad trends are giving young stars a bad influences. In the Sept. 2007 nude photos of High School Musical star Vanessa Hudgens linked over the web, these photos didnt do any harm to her career, just made her the butt of jokes on popular Hollywood satire based shows. Hudgens will be back in action for HSM3. Also, Hulk Hogan's teen son got into a huge car accident in August of 2007, Nick was fine but the passenger in the same car as Nick was not wearing a seatbelt and is now in the hospital suffering major trauma to his head, eye and brain injuries which could leave him in a nursing home for eternity. Nick has been charged with a felony, reckless driving involving serious bodily injury which is a third degree felony that could make him serve up to five years in prison, use of a motor vehicle in commission of a felony, and a person under the age of 21 operating a vehicle with the blood alcohol level higher then state maximum.

Who knows what's next for celebrities? Do they really have to do something that will cause ones life to get noticed in the public? Are they doing this on purpose and why aren't they learning from each others mistakes? These trends are giving young people around the world a bad influence, but as these celebs keep sinking and sinking, their personal life will become a soap opera and their career becomes success.

And I just don't get it!

"Armed Contractors," Not Good for America

Jack Stankewicz
Guest Writer

Here's a question for you. What is the second largest force in the "coalition of the willing" in Iraq? If you said the United Kingdom, Australia, Denmark or even Poland, you are wrong. Of course those are the only countries that contributed troops to Operation Iraqi Freedom, so you appear to be out of options. Not so fast. There is another group in Iraq, and apparently no law, Iraqi or American, applies to it. This group is the private military contractors in Iraq. These armed contractors harm America's image abroad, demoralize American troops, and they help politicians avoid telling the true human cost of the Iraq debacle.

There are about 10,000 armed security forces working for the United States government alone in Iraq, as of October 2007. At the start of this year, there were 7,500 British troops in Iraq. The number of security forces represents only those working for the U.S. government; many more work for the army of non-combat contractors in Iraq. With such a large number of uncoordinated private military contractors, it is no surprise that there have been violent incidents. Some of the most publicized incidents have involved contractors from Blackwater Worldwide, formerly Blackwater U.S.A. Blackwater is responsible for the deaths of at least three U.S. servicemen as well as dozens of Iraqis.

In one plane, the Blackwater pilots were heard comparing themselves to Star Wars pilots flying through the Death Star as they flew through the dangerous mountains of Afghanistan. When the plane crashed, everyone aboard was killed, including three U.S. servicemen. People in a combat zone should be thinking about more important things than Star Wars.

Most recently, the FBI found Blackwater responsible for the deaths of 17 Iraqis in a September shootout. After the contractors heard gunfire, they began to fire indiscriminately into heavy traffic. Whether they wear American uniforms or not, Blackwater and other armed contractors are identified by Iraqis as "American." Indiscriminate shooting during rush hour does not win hearts and minds.

Blackwater Worldwide has "won" a number of no-bid contracts for services in Iraq. Coincidentally enough, Blackwater's CEO, Erik Prince, has donated over $200,000 to Republican causes since 1998. His founding of Blackwater has worked well with Vice-President Dick Cheney and ex Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's continued efforts to privatize the military, efforts that were started as early as 1990, during Operation Desert Storm. On Rumsfeld's watch, the total number of private contractors in Iraq came to rival the number of actual troops.

This increased use of private military contractors in Iraq demoralizes American soldiers. Blackwater's armed contractors can make between 500 and 1000 dollars a day, up to the low six figures per year. Other security firms have similar rates. These inflated salaries are charged straight to U.S. taxpayers. On the other hand, a private in the U.S. Army is paid about $42,000 a year, including all applicable benefits. This gap is partially responsible for demoralizing U.S. troops and is almost entirely responsible for the loss of army personnel to private firms. With morale already low, the U.S. Army does not need this additional blow.

It should be noted that the contractors themselves are not entirely to blame. Some contractors are responsible and adhere to a strict ethical code. Iraqis have noted that in the Blackwater shootout in September, one employee attempted to restrain his comrades. The U.S. government is also responsible for the difficult situation, maybe even more than the contractor's poor choices. Perhaps the real blame should fall on the government that hides behind these contractors rather than admitting the real costs of war to the American public. The State Department has a zero-tolerance policy for casualties for its own employees. This often forces contractors into a shoot-first frame of mind that can be deadly for Iraqis who are in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The U.S. government overuses contractors. Whether this is because our politicians are greedy or because they afraid of the consequences is debatable. Republicans like military contractors because they make money for Republican donors. Democrats like to use contractors because they help keep troop levels down, helping the Democrats appear to be anti-war. Our government needs to take responsibility for its actions and the war in Iraq. Contractors are a temporary and very costly solution. One can't know for sure whether we can salvage the war in Iraq, but increasing the number of men in wraparound sunglasses and a private corporation's uniform is not the way to do it. Using these contractors instead of trained Army personnel only further depletes international faith in U.S. actions and harms us in the long run.