

Crail: Let's stop the bullying

Contributed by Chance Crail
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The bullying at Clear Lake High School needs to stop.

Typical memories of high school include sports, proms, homecomings and parties. Some people just remember a moment. Like the day she became prom queen, or the time he made the touchdown that won the game.

I've been a freshman for eight weeks now, and what an interesting eight weeks it has been. I've battled the horrors of Clear Lake High School, instead of avoiding them like the vast majority of my classmates.

As other freshmen walk the hallways in fear, they are driven by stories of unlucky freshmen that unknowingly let a foot slip into senior "territory" and ended up taped to the flagpole, or facing the reeking depths of a trash can.

These vividly told stories are the weapons with which the upperclassmen maintain an iron grip on their precious picnic tables, located conveniently on a concrete stage in the center of the school. This area, known as "The Quad" is off limits to freshmen by dictation of the upperclassmen. Of course, they can't actually kick freshmen out; the idea is that because they've been in high school the longest, they deserve the special privilege of "owning" the quad.

Upperclassmen also establish a dictatorship over freshmen as soon as school begins. The first day of school, there is a rally. This rally, meant to spark enthusiasm in students, begins with a performance by the cheerleaders. Applause, whistles and screaming dominate the large auditorium.

The cheerleaders then perform for each class separately, beginning with the freshmen. The applause and cat calls quickly turns into booing. Sophomores, juniors and seniors all turn towards the freshmen and the auditorium is filled with one big "boooooo!"

This "initiation," known to the legal system of the California government as "hazing," is not stopped, contained, managed or in any other way controlled by the school's administration. In fact, some might say that the administration supports these barbaric activities. Perhaps that is because the administrators themselves took part in similar traditions when they were in high school.

This booing, or initiation, is a way of making freshmen feel inferior, as if the seniors have complete control over them. With the administration doing nothing to control the chaos, it shows the new freshmen that the administrators allow this behavior to exist, and gives the impression that they, too, believe the upperclassmen should have utmost dictatorship over other students.

These first impressions are said to be a joke by the majority of students I've talked to. But I would think it reasonable to say that a joke is only funny if everyone is laughing.

Being a strong supporter of students' rights, I strongly disagree with many of these "traditions" at Clear Lake High School, and I have made that very clear through my defiance of acceptance. During both of the rallies I attended of the three we've had this year, I have removed myself from the activity in protest as soon as booing commenced. I respect those who respect me, and booing my friends and I is not respectful, therefore I made it a point to occupy senior "territory" at lunch for a full week in order to show that I do not respect anyone who does not respect me.

Because I did this I received countless threats. I also received flying objects, including squadrons of watermelon, water bottles and food containers. From others I have received death threats and countless insults and warnings, including from the administrators themselves!

Multiple times I have heard someone say, "I am going to beat the s*** out of you." I guess it's just an example of how unwilling we are to put a stop to this barbaric culture and accept civilized ethics.

So, the next time someone asks me, "What are you going to remember about high school?" I have a feeling my answer is not going to consist of joyous memories from football games or rallies. As of right now I highly doubt it will contain any recollections of all the great times I was told I'd have in high school. No, I think my answer will be a little different, unless we call for change.

The best solution that my supporters and I can come up with to this problem is to work with the administration to create a new policy that would require upperclassmen to respect freshmen and would require freshmen to respect any senior territory that is noted by the policy.

Other ideas include the implementation of a more positive behavioral curriculum, or programs such as Challenge Day (<http://www.challengeday.org/>), workshops intended to increase students' understanding and connections to each other. Activities that create connections between students typically result in more friendly environments and safer schools.

The administrators are paid by the taxpayers to create a safe learning environment for all students attending their school. If the administrators can't do this alone, as has been demonstrated, maybe the broader community of Lake County should step in and give them a hand.

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