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Black Student Union brings awareness

Hawraa Alsaedi
Staff Reporter

It may sound too good to be true, but imagine a club where you can speak your mind without being judged and mistreated.

Last year, Jame Phillips (English) and Pam Williams (Resource) brought back the Black Student Union.

Phillips said the main goal for the BSU this year is that the group be student-led, where students plan meetings and take a part in discussions.

“Our mission is [to have] a group of diverse students striving toward the respect, awareness and education of black culture to bring unity to our community,” Phillips said. “How do we share the discussions [about black culture] with the school as a whole and educate people on things they simply may not know about?”

Though the BSU was not a part of many events last year, this year it is well on its way, according to Phillips.

“This year, Milton Scales, who is

a Meridian Township trustee and a retired police officer, is coming in each week and helping them establish bylaws and [organize] our first fundraiser,” Phillips said.

Phillips also mentioned a decline in the number of members during fall sport season.

“We had 12 [students] at our last meeting. Last year we had as many as 25 [people] at several of our meetings, so we expect to have more,” Phillips said.

Oke Johnson (12) said she did not have the time to join the BSU last year, but she worked around her busy schedule to make time

“Our mission is a group of diverse students striving toward awareness and of black culture unity to our community,” Phillips said.

Opinion

Guest writer voices concerns of pre

Tala Abolibdeh
Guest Writer

Donald Trump has brought out this nation’s ugly side.

His barbaric approach to what he calls “making America great again” has pointed out just how scared people are. Now I am scared. He is nothing more than a power-hungry, islamophobic businessman who has nothing to do with politics. *So why are people taking him so seriously?*

The America he wants is one led by white supremacists. It seems as though he will stop at nothing to filter out all of the “unwanted people,” otherwise known as minorities.

Donald Trump wants to make

America white again. His tactics of striking fear into Americans’ hearts has proven to work.

I, a Muslim-American, am terrified! Whenever I go outside, I get at least three people staring at me as if I had just bombed a building. My own mother cannot take a drive with-

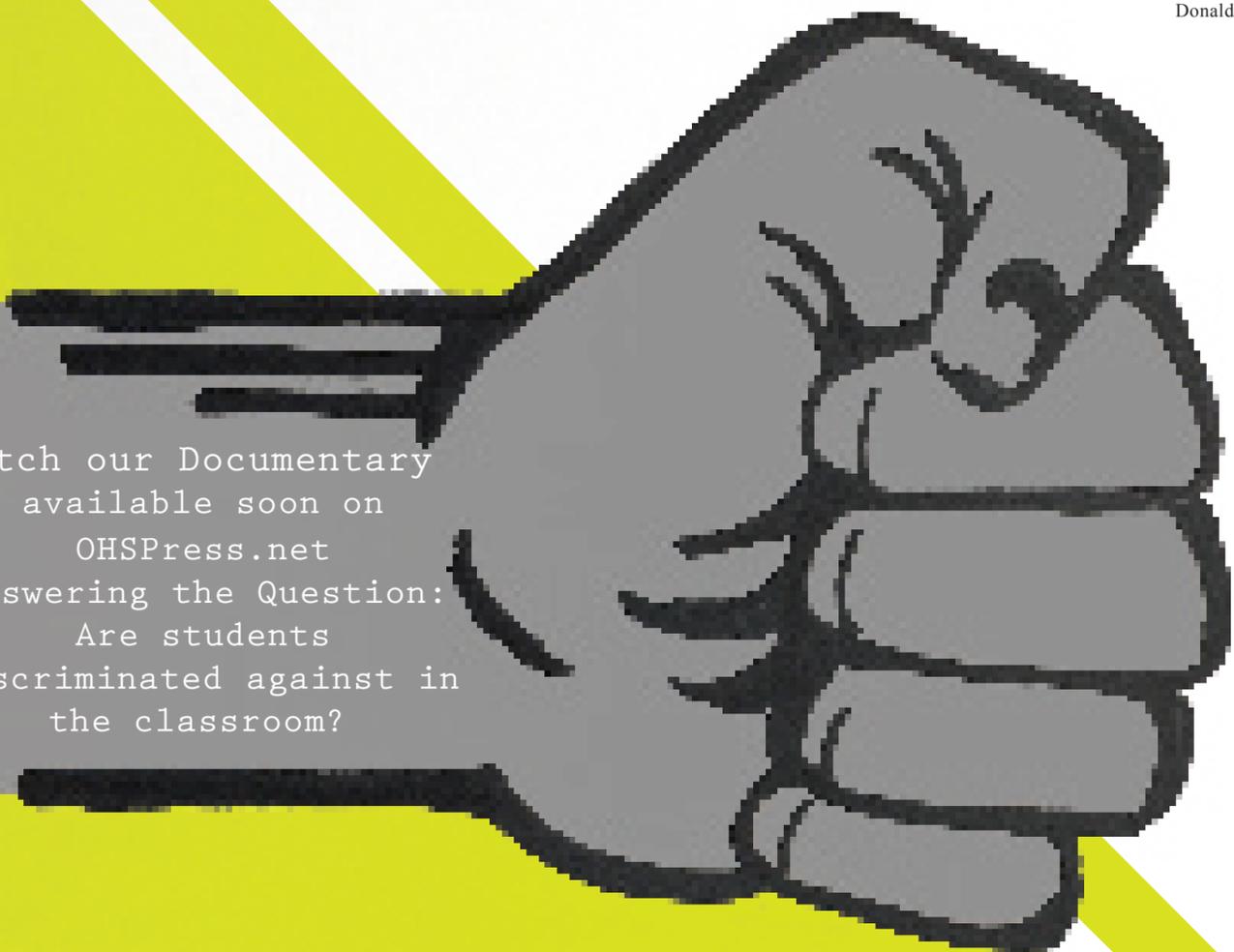
“Whenever I go outside, I get at least three people staring at me as if I had just bombed a building.”

OUT OF 9

95%

SAY RACISM IS A PROBLEM IN OUR SOCI-

Watch our Documentary available soon on OHSPress.net Answering the Question: Are students discriminated against in the classroom?



ness to African American culture

for the club.
 “This is my first year. I wanted to join last year, but my focus was on basketball and getting a scholarship to college,” Johnson said.

“I joined because my sister was a part of the BSU and it really inspired me, and I’m really happy they started again last year.”

is [to have] these students the respect, and education re to bring community,”

Nkiyasi Helm (10) has been a member since last year, joining the club as it was retrieved.

“The group of black stu-

dents here needs to be represented better and there are different things that go on that need to be talked about. I think we should definitely work on making it bigger and more known, telling everybody that you can join even if you aren’t black,

that it’s a space for everybody,” Helm said.

The BSU is finding ways to spread their message in different forms, from posters to open-ended discussions.

“I think it’ll be a very good club to influence our school and the community around us. The Diversity Assembly, I think, will be a very good outlet to influence others to join and also to get our word out there,” Johnson said. “Just making sure we are involved, and educating people on why certain things aren’t right, to make sure the environment we are in is healthy for the new minorities who will be entering the school.”

The members of the Union are still in the progress of fully establishing the club and planning activities around the community. Member numbers are also something the club wants to increase.

“We are still working on telling everyone that it’s okay to come; it’s kind of tough, though, because people already have this idea about it even though they don’t really know,” Helm said.

The BSU holds meetings every Wednesday, except early release days, from 2:45 p.m to 3:45 p.m.

residential candidate’s Islamophobia

out having people cuss her out for no reason. *Is all of this because of a scarf?*

The headscarf, that many have come to fear, happens to represent modesty and piety. It is the flag of Islam and I refuse to be ashamed of wearing it. The religion in itself translates to the act of submission.

We value honesty and peace. The Quran has never mentioned a single

thing about eradicating non-believers. Our golden rule is to treat others the way we want to be treated. *Why has the ideology of Islam been tarnished by a few crazy people?*

Although islamophobia has been around for a while, the spotlight has focused on this topic throughout the entire election. It has given Islamophobia too much coverage, which can ultimately lead to more violence.

Americans need to understand that there is no such thing as a “radical Muslim terrorist,” because whoever commits those heinous crimes are not Muslims. They are uneducated, ignorant beings who want to spread fear in the name of God. If this nation believed this to be true, Trump would have never gotten anywhere and we would have been looking at a very different election.

13th brings attention to injustices in system

Adanya Gilmore

Photo Editor

A new Netflix film is shedding light on issues of criminal justice in the U.S.

According to *13th*, directed by Ava DuVernay, there has been a clear pattern throughout history ever since the 13th Amendment was passed, a clear explanation as for why black people are so often criminalized.

The documentary outlines the loophole in the amendment where it states no one shall be subject to “slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except as a punishment for a crime.*” Scholars such as Angela Davis and Jelani Cobb outline how following the ratification of the 13th Amendment, America’s policymakers have created a rhetoric and a culture of black people being criminalized.

The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics states that 2,220,300 adults were incarcerated in US federal, state prisons and county jails in 2013. Of those, about 800,000 are African Americans.

African Americans are criminalized unfairly for myriad reasons, according to many interviewees in the film. Laws proposed and passed during Bill Clinton’s administration, and the Reagan administration’s anti-drug rhetoric all targeted communities of color in particular according to the film. Richard Nixon’s push to expand the prison system in the 70’s had a similar effect, according to *13th*.

Nixon’s campaign in particular first integrated the war on drugs and crime, according to James Kilgore in *13th*. This was “code” for war on movements such as Black Panthers, Women’s Rights and rights for the LGBTQ communities at the time.

John Erlichman, a major figure in the Watergate scandal and an advisor to Richard Nixon, confirmed this.

“The Nixon Campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people,” Erlichman said in an interview published in Harper’s Magazine April 1994.

During the Reagan Administration, the metaphorical war on drugs was turned into a literal one, affecting communities of color more because of the heavy criminalization of crack-cocaine over powder cocaine.

“Just like we learned today [in Street Law], 5,000 grams of cocaine—which is like a rich white person drug—is equivalent in mandatory sentences to 50 grams of crack, and crack is popular among impoverished people. That kind of does depend on circumstances, but it’s still a problem,” Scott McWilliams (12) said.

Mandatory minimum sentences were introduced by the Clinton Administration, and were initially intended to require that convicted people serve a certain amount of time. The now disparaged crime bill is now known to have largely impacted communities of color

and put more youths in prison, according to the film. Reginald Dwayne Betts, author and a member of the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention for President Barack Obama shed some light from personal experience.

“There was federal grant money available to states for prison expansion explicitly tied to abolishing parole. Throughout the 90s, when you had this parallel trend to send more juveniles to prison with adults, you had the further theft of childhood,” Betts said in an email interview with the OHS Press.

Other factors, such as Nancy Reagan’s “Just Say No” campaign, contributed to the expansion of the prison system.

“I remember it, as a child. But remember it, more as propaganda. As what many would say was a legitimate call, but a naive one. If it were as easy as saying no, addiction wouldn’t be pervasive,” Betts said. “Regardless, what you see is a refusal to think about addiction as a health concern.”

According to the Sentencing Project, black men are nearly six times as likely to go to prison than white men.

Analyzing the mass incarceration rate in America includes statistics on adults, but another major sub criticism, according to ACLU, is the inclusion of black teenagers.

Black youths are twice as likely to be arrested than white youths.

Juvenile prison facilities are also growing. Currently 33 states do not have an age minimum to charge a juvenile with a crime, according to an investigative documentary *Prison Kids: Juvenile Justice in America*.

It has been speculated that this is the result of lawmakers in the 90’s using the term “superpredator” when referring to crime. In 2000, there were approximately 109,000 kids were locked up, and the majority of them were juveniles of color.

Because of the wide change in the prison system over the past few decades, there are now ingrained examples of racism that are seen as the norm, according to National Review on criminal justice reform.

“It’s still a problem that the incarceration rate is different among races,” McWilliams said. “It’s also a lot of the police.”

Police “stop and frisks” statistically target black people and Hispanics twice as much as whites.

Federal prosecutors are almost twice as likely to file for mandatory minimum sentences for black people than white people for the same crime, according to a study published by the University of Michigan Law School.

“I think we need to have a more robust imagination. We should be able to recognize that punishment and safety of communities can be achieved without the massive incarceration of people, of young people,” Betts said.

95 OHS STUDENTS SURVEYED:

46%

HAVE HEARD A RACIAL SLUR OR DEROGATORY PUT-DOWN ABOUT A STUDENT AT OHS IN THE PAST 2 MONTHS

76%

HAVE HEARD A MICRO-AGGRESSION USED IN THE CLASSROOMS AT OHS IN THE PAST TWO MONTHS