

Your Voice Our Voice

How do you feel about diversity at Okemos High School?

Due in part to the fact that there is no concrete opinion reflecting the whole student body, diversity at Okemos is a tricky matter to discuss.

If you ask a student about the climate of diversity at OHS, it's safe to predict that the answer will follow in either of two fashions:

"Okemos has a balanced student body with an inclusive set of ethnic groups,"

Or "Okemos is full of rich, white people,"

First, let's get technical. According to U.S. News' high school rankings, Okemos' student body is made up of 68 percent Caucasian students, 17 percent Asian, 8 percent Black, five percent Hispanic and 2.3 percent other.

These numbers aren't all awful, especially when considering neighboring district high schools like Mason, Grand Ledge or Williamston, where caucasian numbers reach 90, 85 and 74 percent respectively.

Sure, these numbers may tell a somewhat inclusive story for Okemos, but then where does the "rich white people" stigma come from?

The truth is that there is something a little funny about Okemos' diversity that halts students from completely trusting it. Though there are a profound set of differentiating ethnic groups and races, there's a manner of separation that haunts our walls.

To put it the clearest way, OHS shows similarities to Jordan Peele's acclaimed American horror story "Get Out," where liberal racism is brought to light, expressing an ignorance among seemingly acceptant people that produces tension and discomfort for marginalized groups. Besides the explicitly intolerant students among us, this relates to OHS' tendency

of racial separation in a couple of ways:

One way is the literal distribution of people at the school. One who attends OHS knows better than anyone that our hangout areas are divided.

Hangouts differentiate students most heavily by class, where freshmen are isolated in their juvenile maelstroms and the seniors are sectioned off by their own, disinterested fashion. But then what gives the tendency for African/African American students to hangout in the lower AB hallways any reasoning?

Lower AB—a fair reminder that this area had been referred to as "the jungle,"—acts as the melting pot area for OHS. Anyone can go and sit and chat or eat no matter their—well—anything. This means that it's a safe haven for individuals and friends who have fewer options for open common-area.

People who may have more specific places tend to be the wealthier, caucasian students who've formed inclusive relationships with each other, but exclusive to others—AKA cliques.

Think, if you're a student who hangs around lower AB. Would it be weird if you sat yourself at one of the upstairs hall hangouts during lunch or passing time? And if you're a student who doesn't hang around lower AB, do you avoid cutting through that area or the alleyway attached?

A reason to explain why more black students tend to concentrate into this area could be the horror that "like hangs with like," but regardless of whether this is a conscious or subconscious act,

Okemos is separated.

Furthermore, there is social separation within Okemos' curriculum. From a student's perspective, "studies" or adaptive classes show more association with students of color and the economically less inclined, while the vast majority of regular and AP classes are made up of Caucasian and Asian students.

This limits interaction and potential of relation between different groups of people at OHS, and truthfully, studies classes tend to be somewhat neglectful to their students, limiting equity.

Now, it's not necessarily the staff or administrations' fault that people don't feel comfortable talking to others who may not share interests or similarities or that some groups tend to be in the lesser developed curriculums than others—actually, the school board has come up with a coherent and favorable equity plan that addresses flaws in the achievement gap and sets a good tone for our school's diversity.

But the reason Okemos' diversity lacks a concrete value of trust is because it's a complete sham. Staff and administration often praise diversity as a front-running factor in order to promote Okemos, but our school is an example of social division, and when that "diversity" is glorified, it makes it seem like it's okay. Students then grow up thinking that their way of approaching intolerance is acceptable, but it only creates more continued tension.

Diversity at Okemos High School is tricky thing.

There are tons of beautiful relationships between different types of people that set a more inclusive tone, but there definitely are areas for improvement, and a falsely perfect diversity should not be glorified.

Your Voice section featuring student photos and quotes about diversity at Okemos High School.

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Those seeking to express their own opinion are strongly encouraged to submit a letter to the editor. Letters may be edited for libel, irresponsibility, and obscenity.

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Factual errors will be corrected on the opinion page or news briefs upon written request and verification.

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All stories, with the exception of editorials or opinion pieces, should present opposing viewpoints to create a balanced and unbiased article, no matter the reporter's opinion of the subject.

Illustrations and photos will be indicated as such—illustrations are staged or posed, photos are not.

Move over, turkey: the vegan dishes are coming

Meg Wiseman

Staff Reporter

It's that time of year again when students are anxious for a break, families come together, and football is on TV even more than usual.

It's a day to get together and be grateful for the people and experiences in your life — or, for some of us, a day to eat until we cannot walk and our belts flop undone against our pants. This can only be one holiday: Thanksgiving.

While many associate Thanksgiving food with turkey, stuffing and cranberry sauce, not all are able to enjoy these dishes due to special dietary needs. It may seem hard to find alternatives, but never fear! With a bit of help, everyone can make the most of the holiday.

Carolyn Harron (12) has celiac disease, which makes her unable to eat gluten or products with wheat, barley or rye.

"My two older sisters also have it. At first it was hard [to find foods to eat], but now it isn't so bad," Harron said.

Having a gluten intolerance is not as menacing as it seems when it comes to cooking, as many grocery stores and companies have special, easy access products for those in need.

A staple in households during the celebratory season is often dinner rolls and pies, though unfortunately they're packed with gluten. Instead, try making these classic dishes with rice flour or coconut flour, which are gluten-free flour bases. Flours like these can be put into any dish, instantly making classic pumpkin pie and its crust available to all of your guests.

Someone avoiding gluten may have to warn others of their intolerance, though, according to Harron.

"We have two separate sections of food at our house for the holidays, one is gluten free and one isn't," Harron said. "The problem comes in when relatives come over and they cross-contaminate, meaning that they mix up the spoons."

People who have diagnosed food allergies are not the only ones facing trouble. Vegetarians and vegans often feel a struggle every day when searching for meals.

Okemos has many students who choose to live as vegetarians, one being Mia Colony (10).

"When I was younger, eating meat made me feel nauseous," Colony said.

The focus on prize birds during the fall season can create difficulty for vegetarians.

"Usually during Thanksgiving I eat the vegetables and mashed potatoes, or make something for myself to eat alone," Colony said.

It is clear to see how being unable to eat animal products would shake

up Thanksgiving dinner. Luckily, substitutes are not far away; a quick Google search will open up more options than you could ever imagine.

Turkey is the dish at the center of a Thanksgiving meal, the piece de resistance. On the other hand, tofurky, or other turkey alternatives found at stores like nearby Whole Foods, can give anyone a full stomach, just like its bird counterpart.

In itself, Tofurky is simply the brand name for "mock-meats" of the turkey variety. You can even purchase whole Thanksgiving turkey dinners made of Tofurky. Many brands of fake turkey offer similar options with different meals packaged in the freezer aisle.

If you would prefer to make something yourself, popular meat substitutes like tempeh and seitan are great to cook with.

Tempeh is much like tofu, in the

sense that it can be used however you like. Made of fermented soybeans, tempeh has a slightly grainy, firm texture, and can be sliced up to serve right away or steamed. Often a beef or fish substitute, it may be better to use this fiber-filled food in chili or burgers, but toss it in some stuffing or soup and you have a hearty meal to pass around the table.

Another fantastic alternative is seitan. Although it contains a lot of wheat gluten, seitan has the closest properties to actual meats, and can be prepared to emulate the flavors of chicken. Chicken isn't turkey, but it's close enough, and will fill you up just as much as the actual bird.

With the availability of food substitutes rising every year, there's more hope and happiness for every unique holiday eater. How ever you choose to spend Thanksgiving, remember to eat lots, and enjoy the time with family and friends.

Despite common criticism, country music has merit

Anna Alegi

Staff Reporter

With winter approaching, the only way to clear the morning gloom is to put on some country music, roll down your windows, and just pretend it's still warm out while your hands are completely frozen to the wheel. The sad part about this is that winter is the time of year when people hate country music the most. Seasonal fans have shrunk back into the comforts of their mundane music choices and the true fans are left wondering what's wrong with wanting to play "Beachin'" to try and perk yourself up in the cold weather.

In my experience, it's mainly stereotypes and generalizations that take away from people's ability to see country music in a positive light. If you truly believe that all country music is redneck Southerners talking about trucks then you need a reality check.

Country music has a great variety of artists from different states, even

countries! If you want something local, try Frankie Ballard (Battle Creek), and if you like those hockey playing, curling loving, maple syrup eating Canadians look into Shania Twain from Ontario. Even the incredible Dierks Bentley is from the dusty state of Arizona, not Alabama, so you can throw that "solely Southern" stereotype out the door right now!

Lets talk about bro-country for a second. You can tell it's a bro-country song without trying very hard because their lyrics fall into distinct categories that I like to call the "Four Big Bs" they include: beer, butts, boots, and boobs. These songs are not only offensive to our ears but they're also a total disgrace to the country music genre. The prime offenders of this kind of music include Florida Georgia Line, Tyler Farr, Luke Bryan and others.

People who hate the redundant themes of bro country should listen to something like "Girl In A Country Song" by Maddie and Tae.

Speaking of Maddie and Tae, lets talk about women in country music. The biggest problem people seem to have with country music is how a lot of songs objectify women and disregard them as just something for guys to look at while they're drinking beer. Now, of course, if you're looking simply at the bro-country genre you would be right, but there are amazing female artists out there like Maren Morris, Faith Hill, Trisha Yearwood, Kelsea Ballerini and Carrie Underwood to balance out that trash. Of course in every genre there are atrocities like RaelLynn's "God Made Girls" that seriously make you want to stick your fingers down your throat and vomit for a good five hours while trying to figure out if the song is more sexist towards women or men, but you can't judge country music's female artists on that disgrace to humanity.

Another common criticism of country music is its association with more conservative ideals. Okay, sure there definitely are artists with more right-wing ideas, but that shouldn't keep you from listening to an entire genre of

music. Tim McGraw, Garth Brooks, and the Dixie Chicks are just a few examples of the liberal side of country music.

All country music lovers have experienced the heartbreak of plugging into the aux, excited to play the finest selection of country tracks only to be met with a stream of criticism and complaints from the people around them. Without even hearing the first lyrics of the song, some are forced to turn it off and return to the same five songs played on the radio.

Us country music fans are not asking for everyone to drop their favorite kind of music and only listen to country, we just want people to hear country with an open mind, see the positive parts of the music, and think of it in comparison to popular music today.

The truth is, country is the most versatile genre of music ever; there is a song for every situation you might find yourself in. Just killed your husband? Country music

definitely has you covered! Tired of your girlfriend talking about herself all the time? Yup, there is a song for that. Think your tractor's sexy? Of course that song exists! Does she know how to work them cut off things? Don't worry, because Dan + Shay already wrote that song for you to enjoy!

And if you are, for some reason, opposed to purely positive music you can go check out Scotty McCreery's "Five More Minutes," or "Fire Away," by Chris Stapleton.

Classic country songs bring people together. I mean really, what can unite a crowd like the upbeat lyrics of Kenny Chesney, George Strait, Zac Brown Band, David Lee Murphy or Darius Rucker?

So next time you flip on the radio and hear the beginnings of a country song, ask yourself why you want to turn it off. Is it because you decided without warrant that you hate country music? Or is it because you truly have explored all that country has to offer and decided respectfully that it's not the music for you?

A note from the editors

It's been over a month since our newsroom team assembled, and we recently realized that we never explained to you, our readers, who they are or where they came from. To our surprise, we found out staffers don't just appear on our newsroom couch.

We foraged through the hallways looking for the different kids that could put pencil to paper, the ones who will stop at nothing to bring the news to their peers. We gathered them

all: the smart, the funny, the serious and even the sporty staffers. The only thing they all have in common is a love and a passion for producing the news.

Whether they realize it now or not, every single one of them has a vital place in the livelihood of our paper.

Our October issue came and left much more smoothly than expected. After we work out a few kinks we should be back on the road in no

time with a solid November offering. Hopefully, our first issue will be our worst issue...Hopefully.

We try as hard as we can every month to produce the news our readers want. When we heard about our peers desire for more sports coverage, Gerald Sambaer, our Sports Editor (or Sports Editor-in-Chief, as he refers to himself), expanded both his team and his Chieftain Rumble page to include all of the analysis, coverage and superfan content you desire.

In our last issue we took a leap into uncharted waters with our new Confess to the Press page, currently headed by Ewan Woolcock. Here, we try our best to replicate Billy on the Street and put as many student or teacher voices as possible into our paper.

This issue's a tear jerker as Okemos parts ways with its beloved ACE Hardware, a store almost as old as all of us Editors combined. ACE will live on forever in our hearts and

in our tool-filled backyard sheds.

This month's Focus page is solely dedicated to the human brain, something most of us have, but don't know how to take care of. Head on over to pages 6 and 7 to read over all the information and interviews our staff managed to gather with theirs.

As you're reading this issue, our staffers are enjoying their much needed break, eating the deadline stress away at the Thanksgiving table (Read about staffer Meg Wiseman's fresh

Thanksgiving food alternatives and diets here on the Editorial page). As for us Editors, we are much more excited for Meijer to dust off their Christmas decorations and put them back out on the shelves next week.

Until next month,

Handwritten signatures of staff members.