

Black Lives Matter: A Movement

By Mandira Gowda



On Feb. 26, 2012, in Sanford, Florida, a 17-year old boy was fatally shot in the chest by a 9mm semiautomatic handgun for “looking too suspicious.” On July 13, 2013, **George Zimmerman** –the boy’s killer– was found not guilty on all accounts of murder, despite there being ample evidence to support a guilty verdict. Later the same day, three female Black organizers –**Alicia Garza**, **Patrisse Cullors** and **Opal Tometi**– created a “Black-centered political will and movement building project called #BlackLivesMatter” (blacklivesmatter.com) in response to the boy’s death and his killer’s unjust trial.

Since then, the Black Lives Matter movement has 40 local chapters around the globe and has protested and championed for justice for millions of Black lives in America; in the wake of **George Floyd’s** murder in 2020, an estimated 15-26 million people participated in the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests in the United States. In 2020 alone, the movement has inspired people to demand justice for Floyd’s death (managing to arrest his murderers), stand for police accountability and reform (in Colorado alone, **Gov. Jared Polis** signed a sweeping police accountability bill), remove inherently and blatantly racist monuments and statues and police department budget cuts.

“The Black Lives Matter movement should be considered by all Americans as a recognition and a challenge. We should recognize the effects of hundreds of years of discrimination. We should challenge our government, our institutions, our police forces, our criminal justice system, our corporations and our schools and universities to constantly examine their policies to promote diversity and inclusion, to call out discrimination and reduce implicit bias,” **Monte Frank**, a journalist for the Hill, said.

This boy was named **Trayvon Martin**. His death started the biggest movement the United States has ever seen.

Examples Of State Police Reforms The Black Lives Matter Movement Has Inspired

California

- Prohibited use of tear gas, tanks and bayonets on unarmed civilians in San Francisco
- Banned chokeholds statewide

Minnesota

- Banned neck restraints and chokeholds
- Passed the Minnesota Police Accountability Act
- Working on replacing the city’s police department with a community-based public safety model

Philadelphia

- Placed a temporary prohibition on tear gas and “other non-lethal methods”

Washington (Seattle)

- Banned tear gas and chokeholds by police
- Ordered officers to turn on body cams during protests

Connecticut

- Banned state police from using chokeholds
- Prohibited the state’s emergency services buying military-grade equipment from the federal gov.
- Required troopers wear body cams

Texas

- In Austin, the police force’s budget was cut by \$150 million
- Houston banned police use of neck restraints and chokeholds (unless objectively necessary) and directed officers to wear body cams
- Dallas ordered police officers to intervene if another officer uses excessive force

Washington, D.C.

- Banned officers from using rubber bullets or chemical irritants on peaceful protesters for 90 days

Colorado

- Banned the “carotid sleeper hold”
- Denver police required officers and SWAT units to turn on body cams during “tactical operations” and need to report if they intentionally point a gun at a person

New York

- Banned chokeholds
- Repealed a law that sealed records of alleged officer misconduct
- Disclosed what forms of surveillance technology officers use
- Disbanded its plainclothes anti-crime unit



Diversity Club Dives Into A New Year

By Paige Gerling & Lauren Berroa



In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, many activities and clubs at Mountain Vista have had altered schedules and a different atmosphere. One such club is Mountain Vista’s Diversity Club.

“This year [we are] picking back up where we left off and trying to expand the club because last year we didn’t have a ton of exposure,” club sponsor **English teacher Hannah Trudeau** said. “That’s what our mission is right now– trying to get more people to just be aware that we have one [Diversity Club].”

Like many school activities, Diversity Club, a relatively new club, has had a rocky start.

“We got a little bit of a start last year right before COVID. We had like two or three meetings, and we just didn’t meet while we were virtual.”

Prior to the two-week quarantine from Sept. 22 to Oct. 5, Diversity Club held meetings every Tuesday or Wednesday, alternating between the two days to adapt to the challenges presented by the hybrid learning schedule. While the meeting schedule may be different, the mission of the club remains the same.

“I think that it’s important that we’re giving all students a chance to have a voice in school, and it’s important to recognize that there are different types of people and different types of cultures,” Trudeau said. “I think that it’s important that those students have access or that they have a platform to speak when maybe they feel like they are in the minority.”

While Diversity Club highlights how to better integrate diversity into the Mountain Vista community, it also raises awareness about students’ experiences with racism outside of school.

“I have experienced some times where how I look impacted how people talk to me [and] how people treat me,” **freshman Maya Turlapaty** said. “Most of the time it’s really subtle how people will interact with you.”

Diversity Club also offers students a chance to discuss their experiences of discrimination in the Highlands Ranch community.

“I [have] lived in Highlands Ranch my whole life and growing up, reflecting today, I realized that there are a lot of things that happened to me that I didn’t even realize were racist or offensive,” **sophomore Josie Baker** said. “It’s just interesting

to reflect and think back on what has happened without me even realizing it.”

Mountain Vista may have many students, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that there is a lot of diversity within the student body.

“I’ve had some serious comments made toward me, just because of my skin color, or what I’m wearing, or what I look like,” **junior Aristotle Vondce** said.

Other students in Diversity Club have similar experiences with racism in Highlands Ranch.

“I mean there’s a lot [of discrimination occurring] honestly, especially with the kids,” **sophomore Angel Perez** said. “Being bluntly racist and saying, ‘Oh but it’s just a joke man, it’s just a joke.’”

Experiences students have had can pave the way for change to be made in the Vista community and beyond.

“People should be held accountable. Teachers should be held accountable. When they start talking about certain minority groups or talk about slavery and segregation, the first [person] they look at is a minority kid,” Perez said.

These behaviors within school and in the world as a whole are what make Diversity Club important to students.

“I mean there [are] not very many minorities in our school, and I’m one of them. And [Diversity Club is] a place to feel at home, or something I can relate to because we’re a school that’s very, very racist,” Perez said.

While many students may not know much about Diversity Club yet, it allows students to express themselves and bring about change in the community.

“I joined Diversity Club because I like to have a safe place to really embrace my culture and have a place to talk about it,” Baker said.

Ultimately, Diversity Club unites students with shared experiences and backgrounds and provides a safe space for students to come together.

“Having a place where we can talk about those problems and find a way to combat those problems, and hopefully one day have a decent amount of change in our school [is the goal of Diversity Club],” Perez said. “Also to help other minorities who are going to struggle, because I’m not the only one and I know there’s a lot of other people like that. It is a real voice too, and we’re united, instead of being separated.”