

THE POINT

The Official Newspaper of Poinciana High School

February, 2022

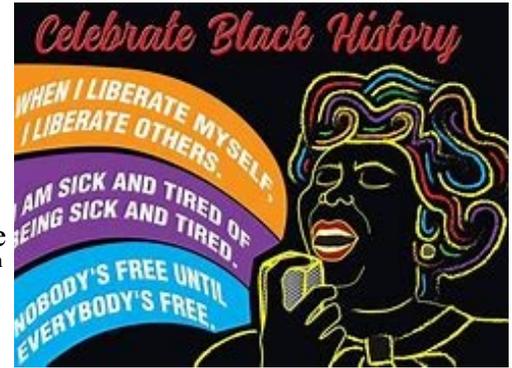
Volume 3, Issue 4

Black History Month

By Janaya Barrett

Instead of erasing the history of African Americans and forgetting the pain they have endured, we celebrate their lives and history throughout Black History Month. This month is a way to observe the neglected contributions African Americans have made on the world and a way for us to celebrate their achievements and sacrifices.

Carter G. Woodson is known as the “Father of Black history.” He announced the creation of “Negro History Week” on February 7th to expand on the teaching of Black history in schools. February was selected as Black History Month because it is the birth month of two abolitionists, Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. Black History Month was officially recognized in 1976. Celebrating the lives of Black Americans allows people to see the important roles they play in America. We highlight the struggles they have faced for civil rights and basic human rights.



African Americans have fought for their freedom in a world that did not accept them. Even now they still face racism and prejudice. There is not a day where racism is not present in the U.S. There is not a day where you do not see an unarmed black man shot and killed by police. Though they have fought long and hard to be freed from the shackles of white people, they still face discrimination.

African American history month allows the history to be told and remembered. Teaching and being aware of Black history fosters appreciation of the culture and fights against xenophobia. The lives of African Americans should be valued and respected, but this can only happen if we teach Black history and are educated on it.

Black history is American history. It should be taught throughout the year, not just confined to one month. African American has a significant impact on American history and cannot be taught without it. Throughout the month of February, we remember the lives sacrificed for Black freedom and advancement. Black people have suffered through many injustices, and they must not be forgotten. We must acknowledge the 300 years of racism and oppression. We must acknowledge that African Americans are an important part of shaping this world.

While reflecting on the painful history of African Americans we must remember the contributions made. African Americans have made many unique contributions to arts, literature, music, sports, science and mathematics. Acknowledging these contributions allows respect for the legacy of African Americans.

America still has a lot of work to do when it comes down to the treatment of Black people. We must continue to spread the history of African Americans and address the harms faced over the years. Educating people on the history of Black Americans will allow for a more equal nation.

“We are at the heart of the American story, and without our story, there is no authentic American story”- Dr. Herron Keyon Gaston.

In Honor of Ms. DeJesus

By Shaneece Griffiths with Victor Gomez



Last month, we lost Ms. DeJesus, a beloved teacher at our school, to cancer. Although she is gone, we will not forget the memories and the impact that Ms. DeJesus made on the students, staff, and administrators at Poinciana High School.

Ms. Rosa DeJesus was the Edgenuity teacher in Room 125. She went to the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico to study to be a teacher. The determination and compassion she had as an educator is what made her loved by so many students.

Ms. DeJesus assisted many of the seniors who had not met all the necessary requirements for high school graduation to reach the finish line before the school year ended. One anonymous

student commented, “[Hers] was literally my favorite class. The first day I got there I was really nervous because I didn’t know how she was, but she made me feel so comfortable. She treated me nicely and encouraged her students to keep going and finish our work on time.” Ms. DeJesus also took on the role of a therapist to her friends and students, setting aside time after class or during lunch to sit with a student or a fellow teacher to discuss personal matters and offer wisdom or sympathy. She would give advice, say some encouraging words or give a much-needed hug.

A 12th grade student named Naydelin Feliz Martinez shared, “I loved her, she and I became really close after just 2 weeks. I would stay after school, do my work and once I finished, we would talk about deep stuff that would be going on.” Ms. DeJesus was known for her sweet, gentle and calming nature; her kind personality and patience is what made students feel comfortable confiding in her.

She also was a skillful guitar player, and before Christmas break Ms. DeJesus and a few students went from class to class performing a Spanish Christmas carol to spread some holiday cheer around the school. Upon news of her passing in January, many of her students and colleagues came together to create a memorial on the fence by the entrance of the school using red and purple solo cups. In her honor, the cups spell out her name accompanied by surrounding hearts. On January 21, students and staff were encouraged to wear clothing in black and purple (her favorite colors) as a school-wide tribute to Ms. DeJesus.

Another of her 12th grader's, Victor Gomez, added, "The memorial was nice. It felt peaceful. All her students and some of the staff came, and we all worked together to make a memory for her. She would have loved it seeing us all there. She would have enjoyed it so much."

In a message to the students that knew and loved Ms. DeJesus, one Poinciana High School teacher said, "the greatest way to honor her is to graduate." So, PHS class of 2022, let's all strive to finish our high school career strong to honor our beloved teacher and mentor in a way that would make her proud of the people we have become.

What is Journalism?

By Arelise Vasquez

Journalism was constructed to amplify voices; it is the profession of writing newspapers and magazines in production and distribution of reports on the interaction of events, facts, and ideas. Journalism is all around, from the daily news channel to your very own school newspaper. The students at Poinciana High School work diligently to report events that happen monthly, creating content for the student body, staff to enjoy and inform on what goes around the school. Here's what Journalism has to offer you!

Journalism at Poinciana

Poinciana High School offers journalism as an elective in three levels: Journalism 1, and then years 2, 3, and 4 where you could officially work on the Newspaper and Yearbook. The first level of journalism is an introduction to the curriculum, allowing students to become familiar with the concepts: preparing each student to become journalists for the school and provide them with experience in case they would like to further their education in journalism after high school. Journalism 2, 3, and 4 is divided into two categories; classified as Newspaper and Yearbook for students who choose to contribute to one or both.

The Point Newspaper

While the way news is reported has evolved and has become more modern, the tradition of reporting the news in the form of a newsletter or newspaper remains. Poinciana High School has adapted to modern technology and offers the school newspaper to the public digitally on the school website in consideration of the environment, thus making it easily accessible to others.

While the way news is reported has evolved and has become more modern, the tradition of reporting the news in the form of a newsletter or newspaper remains. Poinciana High School has adapted to modern technology and offers the school newspaper to the public digitally on the school website in consideration of the environment, thus making it easily accessible to others.

(Cont. on page 8)

“White Discomfort” Bill

By Cheyenne Pero

In late January, Florida advanced a bill banning educational and private institutions from discussing issues related to discrimination inflicted by white people, only to avoid discomforting them. Florida governor Ron DeSantis backed the bill, believing that the consistent teaching of lessons on Black history and the tumult faced in the battle for freedom would make white students uncomfortable and ashamed in public settings.

This bill has evidently spurred controversy not only in the Sunshine State, but amid concerned adults and teenagers across the country. The enactment of “White Discomfort” would eliminate critical lessons from schools, obliterating the most important reason we presently teach history: so we don’t *repeat* it.



The current generation of adolescents are enveloped in a continuous battle for human rights and an endless string of controversies unraveling everywhere around them. From COVID-19 and the political outbursts it stirred, to the Black Lives Matters marches, 2020 was the year that made us believe that perhaps the world could change for the better, as long as we stood unified. Although, another side that combatted the means of harmony among civilization raised the idea that this change could be a long stretch ahead. As of 2022, the day-to-day battles between governments and the strange regulations and bills emerging with grand consideration makes this race to unification counterproductive. Police brutality remains unrelented, and the integration of Black history into educational curriculum is slowly diminishing—erasing the battles fought and the struggle endured.

It doesn’t have to be stated bluntly to recognize that the White Discomfort bill is negligent towards Black hardship, only catering to the majority race who had the luxury to exist in a nation impartial to their presence. The prejudices encountered by people of color were disregarded as this bill weaved through the courts. Florida Senator Shevrin Jones expresses “This bill’s not for Blacks... This was directed to make whites not feel bad about what happened years ago.”

The dilemma stands with ignorance. When a white person is subjected to the struggles faced by people of color, an instinctual feeling to retaliate and defend oneself eliminates any chance of understanding. The inability to sympathize with our own brothers and sisters amid the country we all live in together, and the failure to embrace history and promise to bring upon a redemption could only result in continuous differences. The only lesson attempted to be shared is one where we can all show humility and benevolence towards one another—though the misinterpretation of the means behind our teachings of historical events has set back this plausible societal change.

It is crucial that this bill is not enacted, for the world stands at a point of conflict and a resolve to it all can never be accomplished as we only erase history and allow our mistakes to repeat.

Black Student Alliance

By Arelise Vasquez

In honor of Black History, the month of February is dedicated to educating the world about the role models who have inspired a world of upcoming leaders. The students at Poinciana High School have constructed an alliance to unite the student body regardless of race and color as a community to enlighten those on the historical legacies these figures have brought to honor the morals, values, and traditions each portray.

The Black Student Alliance was established at Poinciana High in January of 2021. Christopher Medina, President of BSA stated that over 70 students are currently active in the program. Within just these two years it has reached a hike in participants. The impact on the student body has created a “safe space” for students to “express how they feel about specific topics” and “encourage communication with others to learn of one's culture,” states Medina.



Currently, there is only one position within the program who is labeled as president and this role entails organizing activities around the school sponsored by the BSA and recruit new members that would make great candidates for the program.

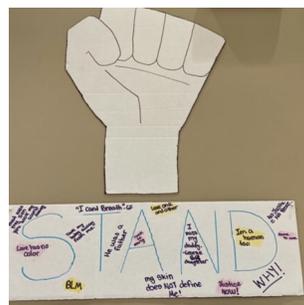


BSA Black History Month GALA

On February 25th, the Black Student Alliance held their very first gala. It entailed performances like step, contemporary dances, piano and singing. The event was held between both A and B lunch. Performances were held outside and in the auditorium. An art gala walk through was filled with posters on Black Impact, Black Historic figures, and Black authored books. Art galas like this help raise awareness on the value of the black community. Members of the group have benefited from this alliance in becoming “better

people, better versions of themselves, with the help of Mr. Scott and his encouragement.” -Kayla Ladoucer 11th grade.

The Black Student Alliance desires to continue to portray an image of excellence and culture to share with members to come, across the school as they continue to REP the P.



‘Don’t Say Gay’ Bill

By Janaya Barrett

The Parental’s Right in Education or commonly known as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill has been passed in the state of Florida by the house of committee. This bill is aimed to ban discussions about the LGBTQ+ community and sexual orientation. The Don’t Say Gay bill limits the voices of teachers and silences the LGBTQ+ people. It was put into place because many parents would like to control their child's upbringing.

School is a place for many kids to express themselves freely without hiding their identity from everyone. Most kids only feel comfortable doing that at school because it's their safe place. Parental Rights in Education bill sensors students and does not allow them to be open. With this bill in place, it takes away a child's control over their own life. Parents cannot control everything and limiting what a child could earn during school isn't protecting them. Students should have the right to their own opinion without a parent controlling that and teachers should be able to talk about the LGBTQ+ community when brining awareness.

Not only does this bill require teacher to not have conversations regarding sexual orientation and gender, but it also requires educators to “out” LGBTQ+ students to their parents without their consent. Requiring teachers to do this puts many students at risk and forces them back in the “closet.” Having your sexual orientation publicly announced puts many in vulnerable positions. Many LGBTQ+ already subjected to bullying and violence for just being themselves. There's a reason why students do not come out to their parents. Many do not feel accepted in their families and should be able to come out when they are ready. Teachers should not be required to get in the way of a student's life. Their job is to educate and do no harm but outing students can cause harm.

This bill is hateful. Banning conversations about the LGBTQ+ community doesn’t allow the history to be spread. It leaves people uneducated and erases LGBTQ+ culture and conversations. Removing talks about sexual orientation and gender pushes students to hide who they really are, it doesn’t show students that they should be able to express themselves openly in a world that will accept them.

The basic values of LGBTQ+ students are being rejected by Florida's politicians. Leaders who are supposed to ensure protection and freedom are trying to limit what a student can and cannot be. Schools should not have the right to “out” a student and discussions based on LGBTQ+ oppression and culture should be allowed. Politicians must not limit what a student learns in school.

Advocates and the LGBTQ+ community are continuing to fight against this bill. Many are not informed of this bill and how it affects LGBTQ+ students. The Parentals Right in Education bill should not take away conversations about sexual orientation and gender as children should be able to learn about it. Teachers should not be sued for having open conversations with students. LGBTQ+ discussions are important to have and should not be censored in the classroom.



Defying the Book Ban

By Cheyenne Pero



In 1933, over 25,000 books were burned in Germany following the inception of the Nazi-party's authority. Publications ranging from each genre were destroyed and banned due to their Jewish authorship, and schools eliminated socially informative novels from their educational curriculum. Scientists, philosophers, and intellectuals such as Einstein, Remarque, and Freud were among the cohort of Jewish authors shunned from their country—their propositions, ideas, and theories banned from impacting the youth “*negatively*”.

Although the banning of books appealed to people in the notion of building a strict, uniform standard, its creation of ignorance and decrease of open-mindedness stole comprehension of worldly matters from an entire generation. And now this situation is occurring again in our present time.

Emerging from an era of resistance, protests, and hardship endured to fight for change, to fight for justice, and to fight in the name of the ones done *unjust*, it is immensely disdaining to witness history repeating itself. Books dealing with topics of racism, authoritative abuse, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and the battles against such both fictionally and nonfictionally have slowly disappeared from the shelves of accessible libraries and are rarely seen in bookstores. Renowned titles like “*To Kill a Mockingbird*”, “*Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl*”, and “*The Book Thief*” have had their place in educational institutions heavily debated against and were collectively “banned” in 2020 among other novels.

According to *About the Books*, “In 2020, more than 273 titles were challenged or banned with requests to remove books that confront racism or racial injustice.” Additionally, books concerning Indigenous lives and those with mentions of bullying were banned as well. As of 2022, more than 800 books were put on the “watchlist” in Texas, and plenty dystopian and historical fiction novels have been targeted for portraying themes of equality in all forms: gender, race, religion, etc.

A specific book that has received excessive pressure amid the book ban is “*Maus*” by Art Spiegelman, which is set during the Holocaust and contains violent content. Speaking on the 2022 reemergence of the book ban, *The Atlantic* explains “hiding these images from children purposefully ignores the mechanized gruesomeness of the Holocaust.”

While this action seemed liable in the light of excluding racist tones and violence of any form from classrooms and the general public, it only serves to erase the harrowing facets of history. This elimination of informative material prevents students from understanding how the era they’re living in came to be: why violence exists around us, why prejudices are engrained in society, and most importantly, they cease to understand how to combat these situations.

Although the book ban is consuming the world at an increasingly rapid rate, there are ways to slow it down and bring important titles back into the spotlight. Authors and activists are strongly encouraging students and people around the world to buy these threatened books, to bring them back onto the shelves with high demand. As a generation ruled by the mistakes made by those before us, taking back authority over our education, our lives, and our communities is pivotal in reversing these circumstances. Hope for a better future has not vanished; it only takes courage to restore what’s been stolen from us.

What is Journalism?

By Arelise Vasquez

(Cont. from page 3)

The Voice of Students

Journalism is a safe space for students to be who they are and express themselves freely. The newspaper places emphasis on amplifying the voices of students, as it is written proudly by students. Articles are not solely based on informing students on events that have happened, but touches base on topics that hit home within the student body. These include topics that allow students at Poinciana High to understand they are not alone, showing that there are students who think and go through similar situations—creating unity and support. Students are interviewed to construct a professional atmosphere, allowing students to see a one-to-one connection is important regarding how they feel about certain topics.

Yearbook Staff

To complete the Journalism duo, the yearbook staff also works hard to prepare a token capturing each moment throughout the year for students to take and cherish beyond their high school careers. During class, the staff is expected to design layouts, themes, and colors to complement a long year of work, success, and memories.

Jamiel Miranda, a senior, expressed his interests for being part of yearbook; “I like working with the programs, I am a major fan of technology and computer work so the yearbook allows me to execute those skills.”

IMPACT

Various students have returned to journalism after their basic knowledge level classes to pursue their passion or newfound passion to write, edit and construct these masterpieces we call Newspaper and Yearbook. Students have also witnessed “improvement in their writing, as they learn to construct a piece as a professional writer,” stated Janaya Barrett, 11th grade.



ATHLETICS

PHS Girls' Wrestling Wins Big!

By Beatriz Gonzales

The 2021-2022, Florida High School Girls Wrestling was officially sanctioned as a high school sport, moving it from an intermural to a scholarship-based program. February 9th marked the 1st ever FHSAA District 7 tournament in states history. All the Lady Eagles wrestling from PHS were victorious and moved forward to the first ever Regional 2 tournament! We are so very proud of the students that participated and fought their hardest.



Sophomore Kaylie Collado, First ever District 7 champion on the 145-weight class, will go to States as the 2nd ranked wrestler in the Region at 145, not only that but she has also been the OBC champion! She has a marker of 29-6.

Senior Ivanis Pimentel is going to states for 140 after placing 4th in the district. Cynthia Olds as a freshman has placed in the top 3 of all tournaments, she has competed in. She brought home 2nd place at district 7 for 135 weight class.

Junior Amelia Gonzales (3rd in district 7) and Geriely Guzman both “fought hard this year as 1st time wrestlers and advanced to regionals.

Captain Angellina Gastelum (Junior), unfortunately got injured early, but as always, has continued to be a leader for both the boys and the girls.

When asked her opinion on the girl's performance, Coach Wilberger states "All of the girls have worked hard this year. This is the first year girls wrestling have been sanctioned and every tournament moves us closer to 1st state championship. The wins are both individual and team won."