

Staff Editorial

Alluding to conversation isn't starting it

Buried among other straightforward have-faith-in-yourself, we-can-all-be-friends type of messages embedded in 'Bring it On' is a story about the way opportunity is correlated with race and economic stability.

On its surface, it's about a cheerleader named Campbell who is forced to transfer schools after her neighborhood is redistricted. It is later revealed that this is orchestrated by the show's antagonist, Eva, who has her mom, a member of the school board, redraw the district lines so that Campbell no longer attends the school and Eva can be the Head Cheerleader, essentially gerrymandering for cheerleading advantage as opposed to political advantage.

When Campbell discovers that her new, racially diverse inner-city school doesn't have a cheerleading squad, she forms her own to compete against her old white suburban school, to get revenge on Eva, and to fulfill her cheerleading dreams. What's key is that beneath the competitive spirit in the foreground are tensions between the schools' racial, economic and opportunity differences.

The play ultimately resolves the conflict when Campbell's team loses and is forced to reconcile by proclaiming that the true victory lies in friendship and working together. But those underlying tensions, while clearly not solvable throughout the course of a single cheerleading competition, are never addressed adequately at the conclusion of 'Bring it On.'

After her school loses the competition, Campbell is awarded an honor for "first place for everything that matters," implying friendship and perseverance, which overshadows the injustice of the situation and suppresses any indication that these underlying factors-- race, economic status, neighborhood-- really do matter.

The musical also sets up a problematic white savior complex where minorities can only succeed through the aid of a benevolent white person, which is the role that Campbell plays in changing the norms of her new school and starting a competitive cheerleading team.

While the show does address these factors, the lack of conclusiveness and true excavation of the issues can't possibly create the true and thoughtful conversation that it is said to bring.

Ultimately, this isn't worthy of a pat on the back for raising awareness and "starting conversations" about opportunity afforded by race and economic stability-- a characteristic New Trier response evident in seminar day and the response to racist graffiti. It seems like we'd rather avoid and ignore thoughtful conversations about controversial issues than embrace them.

Because of their relevance to this community, these messages are the most poignant and, as a result, are deserving of more self-aware discussion than is permitted by its positioning as the underlying context. Our school needs to create opportunities for discussions where race and economic status aren't the underlying context but the true subject under examination.

They warrant more complete analysis within our school that can't be addressed in one-and-done instances where we congratulate ourselves for surface level acknowledgment. Alluding to a conversation isn't the same as starting it.

You have my attention



by Ezra Wallach

The Cambridge dictionary has two separate definitions for attention. The first one is "the act of directing the mind to listen, see or understand."

The second one is the "time or effort that you are willing to give to help someone or something because you care about that person or thing."

The first definition describes simply noticing things, or as we like to say, paying attention.

The second one, though, requires something more than just directing the mind; this definition almost makes attention seem as if it is more of a sacrifice than a random and uninspired action.

In this sense, attention can only be given to something for which one is able to care about.

Attention, while always present, is precious and valuable. There seems to be a difference between using attention to notice and using attention to care. But for me and maybe you too, there isn't that much of a difference at all.

No matter what you think of New Trier, you'd probably be lying if you said that you didn't want to graduate already and leave, but

that shouldn't mean you hate it too. Where we live doesn't actively do anything in order to grab our attention, it's just there whether or not we wanted it to be—and that can be enough.

My first connection between care and attention came from the movie "Lady Bird." The main character, who goes by the name Lady Bird, lives in Sacramento and can't wait to graduate and go to college on the East Coast.

When Lady Bird's teacher is reading one of her college essays, she asserts that Lady Bird loves where she lives, even though Lady Bird thinks differently.

Lady Bird questions her, and then after her teacher says that she writes about it with such care and affection, she responds by saying, "well, I guess I pay attention."

And then this next line is what really got me. Her teacher says, "Don't you think they are maybe the same thing? Love and attention?"

After Lady Bird leaves Sacramento for college, she realizes her "hatred" for her hometown was hiding as love in disguise, and she starts to miss her family and her past life due to the fact that she had paid so much attention to it while she was there.

For years she had been telling herself about how much she hated her house, her school, and her city, but she had also never known anything else.

My parents are moving to California after I graduate, and I've always kind of told myself that I didn't care. I've told myself that

I was indifferent about the North Shore, and by doing so I thought it would be easier to leave when it was finally time to—but this seems not to be the case.

Every day, I give my attention to everything that is here. I give my attention to the freezing temperatures, how much faster it takes to walk up the stairs if I go two at a time slow or one at a time really fast, deciding whether the pasta line or the burrito line seems shorter, and many other things.

I'm still trying to leave and go to college outside of the Midwest, but that doesn't necessarily mean I hate it here—I'm just ready for something else. I hate certain aspects of where I grew up, but for now I think it's impossible for me to hate somewhere that I've spent so much time giving my attention to.

In a few months when I leave, I hope it will be easy, but it probably won't be. When I stand alone in an unfamiliar place, it will be different and probably a little bit scary. But that's okay.

While we are still here, remember that this place, for many of us, is all we've ever known, and while we can expect other places to give us what we want, they can never replace our home town that watched us grow up and become adults through everything.

Whether we like it or not, we are all north shore kids, and the attention we pay to our hometown can really just be love. Try not to wait until you're gone to figure that part out.

Stop undermining Oakton



by Claudia Levens

The other day in one of my classes, we were discussing college applications and someone expressed their exasperation with the process by saying, "I'm giving up and going to Oakton."

In the heat of a stressful moment, it's by no means rare to find a typical New Trier student's fears of failure and existential crises manifesting in comments about folding their cards, peacing out, and going to Oakton.

In case you're unaware, Oakton is a two-year community college completely legitimate, and often an ideal college option for many students.

The most obvious reason that students attend community college is the financial advantages, since it's less expensive. It's not uncommon for people to attend community colleges for 2 years and then transfer to other schools.

Students are also attracted to the flexible schedules and chance to have more freedom to explore career

and study choices.

A pervasive misconception about community college is that it puts you at a disadvantage in life. But many people including actor Tom Hanks, community activist Dolores Huerta, director George Lucas, and Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers have all attended community colleges and have spoken out about its impact on their careers and their lives.

I understand the way a stressful moment can exacerbate our most profound fears and that jokes like these are a sort of coping mechanism and might even elicit a laugh.

But in making derogatory remarks about Oakton, we're handling our rational fears about the future through a sense of superiority and propagation of an irrational stereotype that schools without prestigious reputations are not valid places to attend.

The bubble we live in is run by college hierarchies, and Oakton is seen as the lowest rung on the ladder. By making jokes about it, we're invoking its perception as a place of low standards to comfort ourselves. At the same time however, we're undermining all the reasons why it is a desirable option for a lot of people.

The ability to have high expectations for yourself in the first place, while it can feel stressful, sometimes, is a privilege. And high standards themselves are neither

inherently good or bad. But they become detrimental when they are not fully realized as privileges because this prevents us from maintaining a broader perspective.

Throughout our lives, this emphasis on reputation and prestige has been instilled into us by well-meaning parents, media, and societal pressure. These influences aren't in our control, but we can control our responses to it.

We can be conscious of how we're talking about college because we never truly know who's listening, what their circumstances, are and the way it might make them feel.

Not only with community colleges but with all colleges. We wouldn't want that to be done to us, so why should we do it to others.

We should also change how we think and talk about community colleges for our own benefit as a way of extricating ourselves from stereotypes and judgements and as a way of maintaining our own sanity. Living here, you can get trapped into thinking that you deserve something more than Oakton.

Receiving an education of any kind is a gift that we should feel lucky to receive. And the more thankful we are, the happier we'll feel and the less likely we are to succumb to the weight of college stress that makes us say those things in the first place.



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