

# Staff Editorial

## The lockdown needs to be a wake up call

The false alarm lockdown last Friday was unnerving, or even traumatic, for almost everyone at the Winnetka campus. For nearly fifteen minutes it seemed as though everyone's worst fear had been realized--an active shooter had entered our school.

Frantic group text messages bombarded phones of students and staff. The in-and-out mumbling over the loudspeaker only amplified the chaos.

Students were in locked classrooms with the lights turned off, the door barricaded with desks, and people crying or texting their parents to say goodbye. Any noise made the entire room flinch, each person straining to hear gunshots that thankfully never came.

School shootings are statistically extremely unlikely. We were all surprised by the lockdown. But during those 15 minutes when we didn't know what was going on, there was almost a sense that a shooting had been bound to happen at our school.

Thankfully, New Trier has several safety mechanisms in place, and most of them functioned exactly as they should. We have one lockdown drill every year, and as a result everyone was able to act swiftly once the siren sounded.

Within a minute, most classrooms were locked, barricaded, and silent as per protocol. Police were on campus within three minutes of the alarm. The security staff, teachers, and administrators did a great job under remarkably stressful circumstances.

If anything good came out of the false alarm, it was knowledge of what exactly needs to be changed or improved in the event of a real emergency. Some doors could not lock, and there were a few rooms where the PA system could not be heard.

If there ever was a legitimate lockdown at New Trier, staff now know exactly how to handle the situation.

However, the distress the lockdown created among students and staff serves as a painful reminder of the threat posed by school shootings.

It is disgraceful that in 2019, American students and teachers fear being shot and killed at school. The fact that in-depth security scanning systems, check-in vestibules, shatter-proof film over windows, and lockdown drills are necessary is problematic.

Our country's legislators have failed to enact reasonable gun-control laws, and schools around the country have been forced to pick up the slack.

NT has taken a lot of steps to ensure student safety, and this was shown when the lockdown last Friday went relatively smoothly. Many schools throughout the country do not have the resources to ensure the same level of preparedness.

Universal background checks and other "common sense" gun reform have widespread bipartisan support. According to an ABC poll from September 9, 89 percent of Americans believe background checks should be required for all gun buyers, and 86 percent agree that police should have the power to take guns from people deemed dangerous by a judge.

Despite such pervasive agreement, Congress has been unwilling to implement these basic reforms. The prominence of pro-gun donors for national campaigns has made it nearly impossible to create any sort of change. The cost of these campaign contributions is being paid in the lives taken by gun violence throughout this country everyday.

As students, we need to demand change from our legislators. Regardless of your party, ideology, or politics, most can agree that small steps can be taken to make it more difficult for guns to get into the wrong hands.

If politicians refuse to make even minor changes, they should be fearful of losing their seats in Congress come the next election. More and more students are coming of voting age, and we likely won't vote for candidates who lack the conviction to do the right thing.

On March 14, 2018, students across the country, including hundreds from NT, walked out of class to demand legislation that would limit the accessibility of guns and the likelihood of school shootings after the Parkland massacre. Since that walkout, what has changed?

We were lucky it was only a false alarm last Friday, but this needs to serve as a wake-up call. This is not normal, the fight is not over, and we cannot become complacent.

# The New Trier News

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All letters to the editors are welcome, though we will not print anonymous letters. Direct these and other inquiries to our email at ntnews@nthn.net

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# Teachers need to stop using the N-word



by Eva Roytburg

New Trier has a racial slur problem. In 2018, a student was caught after writing a racial slur, the "N-word", on a bathroom stall. There were several copycat incidents afterwards.

This week, advisors are discussing the N-word and the use of it at school. The school hopes that these conversations will inform students about why it is bad to use slurs and will produce a safer environment among students.

Yet in an environment in which the use of the N-word is treated with proper hostility, the issue of teachers reading the word out-loud to students hasn't been fully addressed. The sophomore English curriculum includes books such as "The Other Wes Moore" by Wes Moore and "The Intuitionist" by Colson Whitehead, both books which contain the slur. There have been several instances accounted by students of white English teachers at New Trier reading this slur to their students.

This is an injustice to the black

students who attend New Trier and could be sitting in those rooms. The word is not from the teacher's craft, but the act of reading it out loud realizes strong imagery of violence which could severely damage student's safety in the classroom.

Though the English department has recently asked teachers not to read the word out loud, they have not gone far enough. Non-black teachers must be banned from reading it.

Gabby Manna, a black student at a college in Connecticut, describes the issue eloquently. In her essay, "To the Lecturer Who Read the N-Word Aloud in Class", she exclaims, "You forced these students, without warning, to hear a word stirring up memories of slavery, violence, murder, rape -- the history of violent racism that continues today for black people in this country... speaking it out loud is performance. It is the intentional act of making that word heard -- of stirring up a violent past and present that is not only directly harmful to your students but could be putting their lives in immediate danger. When the word is on the page, it has no owner -- you wanted to own that word."

There is very little educational value in reading the word out loud. I am not suggesting the abolition of teaching all works of literature which contain it but teachers do not lose anything from simply skipping

over it or replacing it with N-word.

But there is much that is suggested by a teacher in class reading it out loud. It suggests that it's okay to say the word if it's not their own words. By this logic, that means it's okay for non-Black individuals to use it when singing songs which contain the word, or when reading out loud a Twitter post to their friends.

Those practices are not acceptable. When a non-black person uses the word today, it is ridden in a context of hatred and violence. The fact that some black people use it doesn't mean white people can.

The teachers who have used this word in school likely do not have malicious intent. By teaching books that contain historical situations using the word, they invoke important conversations about race writ large.

But they still have a commitment to their rainbow-colored safe space posters on the wall, and by using the word, they can make the classroom an unwelcome area for students of color.

In a school where 83% of students and 90% of teachers are white, teachers must foster discussions of the N-word and other slurs. In order to best realize an educational environment that is safe for all, non-black teachers must set a good example for their students and not speak the word.

# Ok boomer



by Katy Pickens

Following the panic and confusion caused by the lockdown on the Winnetka campus last Friday, many students looked to @newtrier203 on Instagram for an explanation.

The same note Paul Sally had sent to parents was the caption of a photo that read "A message to New Trier families." While the caption was helpful, the comment section was easily the most fascinating and entertaining component of the post.

An older gentleman had left a comment on the photo that rubbed most students the wrong way.

"Ridiculous that there are lockdowns. Teaches fear when the odds of needing it are close to zero. Worry about cars and drug abuse. This is what gets NT kids," he wrote in his comment.

Given the traumatic events just hours before this post, the comment was tactless. Though school shootings are super unlikely, practicing procedure in the event of a lockdown saves lives. NT also spends a lot of time talking about drugs, and I cannot be sure of exactly what he meant about "cars."

It was not clear who this man was or why he had the authority to make these claims, but that didn't matter. His profile picture showed his white hair, beige suit, and baby blue tie - he was a certified Boomer™.

Beneath his comment were nearly 30 replies that all said the same thing: "ok boomer" (and one "boomer ok").

Honestly, I laughed. It felt good to see a hurtful comment shut down.

While generational warfare is

nothing new, the "ok boomer" meme has become a way for Generation Z to fire back at Baby Boomers (or really, any adult) who make offensive remarks or display disdain for young people.

In this instance, the Boomer's comment triggered this response because it demonstrated a lack of empathy for what the lockdown was like and why lockdown procedures exist in the first place.

This is especially interesting considering that when Baby Boomers were our age, they had to hide under desks during H-bomb drills, while today we similarly practice hiding from active shooters.

In fact, there are several similarities between Gen Z and the Baby Boomers.

Boomers marched on Washington D.C. to protest the Vietnam War, demanded Liberation for women, and fought for the Civil Rights Movement to expand equality. Today, Gen Z marches on Washington to demand gun reform, fights for justice for the LGBTQIA+ community, and advocates for the preservation of our planet.

When Baby Boomers were young, they believed that previous generations had created a heap of problems that they needed to solve. Now that their position has been reversed, some Baby Boomers display an unwillingness to sympathize with young people or listen to our ideas.

Obviously, not all Baby Boomers are uncaring or uncompromising. In fact, most of them aren't. However, enough Boomers are so unwilling to listen that there is cause for concern.

As Greta Thunberg (my queen) said in her speech to the UN, "We are in the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth - how dare you!"

This comment perfectly encapsulates Gen Z's outrage with the Baby Boomers. We are called entitled, lazy and naive simply for pointing out the problems we face

and demanding solutions. But the world cannot afford to forestall until all the callous Boomers retire.

This anger has been channeled into a comeback made of the best tools we have -- sarcasm and memes.

The only reason we say "ok Boomer" at all is because it is an efficient way to fight back when we are shut down for doing something that older generations may not understand.

However, I must admit it is difficult for young people to empathize with Boomers as well.

Right now I am 17. Becoming a sixty-something-year-old feels almost impossible. I do not yet have the experiences to understand the Baby Boomer generation. I imagine it can be scary to see today's kids shirk tradition and challenge authority while seeing the world change a hundred times over in the span of a single life time.

I know that Gen Z will eventually get old (unless climate change screws us all over). The youth of the future will begin doing things and voicing ideas entirely unimaginable to us now. I wonder if our generation is doomed to acquire the same lack of empathy and refusal to listen that have fueled thousands of Boomer memes.

My only hope is that as a generation, despite the mistakes that we are bound to make in the future, we are able to maintain a stronger sense of open mindedness.

As I live in new places, meet new people, and grow older, I believe it is critical that I maintain an openness to other perspectives. If I reread this when I am 67, even if I can't exactly remember how it felt to be 17, I hope that I remember the frustration of not being heard.

We say "Ok Boomer" because otherwise there's a chance that we won't be listened to at all, or that we'll be lectured about our laziness or naivete. My generation wants change, dialogue and progress, and we're willing to work to make it happen - we simply need adults to listen.