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Photo by DELPHI LYRA '24

“What does that mean to keep my identity?”

Wil Chuch and Karennahawi Barnes Talk Growing Up On-Reservation, and Off It

By KARENNAHAWI BARNES '24

He lifts his small, blond, blue-eyed daughter, Capi, onto his shoulders. “How was everyone’s week?” he asks. His voice is calm and affirmative. Each member of the Native Affinity Group takes their time to list off the positives and negatives they’ve encountered in the past week. William Chuch, religion teacher, coach, and our group leader, listens closely as he lifts 3-year-old Capi off his shoulders so she can run and sit in my lap.

Our group consists of three Mohawks from Akwesasne, three Navajo from New Mexico, and another White Mountain Apache staff member. Since there are only 6 students and 2 staff members, we consider ourselves a family, small but close-knit, always looking after each other.

Chuch is a member of the Potawatomi Tribe, located in Oklahoma, but he was never a part of it until just a few years ago. He only knew of his affiliation with the tribe because of his yearly visits to see family on the reservation during summer. He was never taught any of the customs and practices. By definition, Chuch is considered a “City Indian.”

In contrast to Chuch’s experience growing up, I grew up on my reservation my whole life before coming to NMH. I’ve been surrounded by my culture my whole life and I still am. I go to Longhouse and ceremonies every break from school and learned to incorporate my culture and beliefs into my lifestyle at school.

Chuch and I talked in the library. Our conversation has been abbreviated and edited for clarity.

* * * * *

Karennahawi: So can you talk a little bit about when you first left the reservation and what that process was like for you?

Chuch: My mom’s whole family’s history is on the reservation. So the reservation was part of our history, but not part of my lived experience. My mom had experienced some pretty horrific things growing up, and so the way that she viewed being Native or living on a reservation was very much a negative thing. When I was brought up, living off-reservation, I didn’t know much about my culture or my people. I knew that I was Native, and that was about the extent of it. I very much felt like an outsider for a long time.

Karennahawi: So were you born off reserve?

Chuch: I was born off the reservation. The only reservation experience I had was going there every summer and being there with family. Our reservation was in Oklahoma, but I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area very much intentionally ostracized from my community, by my parents.

Karennahawi: So I know that you are learning the language of the Potawatomi. How did your mom feel about that?

Chuch: When I was in late middle school, early

high school, I was expressing a lot of interest. My mom would give me her short answers. And then the internet became a thing, and she realized, like, “Oh, crap, like, I can’t just hide him from this.” My mom and her family were involved in a lot of pretty horrific crime and violence. My mom’s dad ended up on death row. My mom, growing up, equated reservation with violence, sexual violence, physical violence, and she eventually equated Natives with that. And she’s like, “I don’t want to be a part of that.” It’s a super common story for reservation Natives. And there’s a distinction between me, where like, I’m more than half Native, right? Compared to, someone’s like, “I’m 0.001%.”

Karennahawi: Native princess. [Chuch and I are referring to when people with zero or very little Native ancestry take on a full Native identity. A saying that’s most used is, “My grandmother was a Native princess.”]

Chuch: Like my great triple-aunt was queen or whatever, right? You’ve heard?

Karennahawi: Yeah.

Chuch: So for me, it was kind of toeing that line, and this is one of the hard things for the affinity group, and being part of the faculty of color here is — if I wanted to — I could very much pass as just a white dude. I’m aware of the fact that I can be this guy who just gets tan during the summer. It was this intentional thing [for me] to lean into it. And for

Native folks, as far as passing goes, that was always the goal from the American government: to try to make it like, “No, you’re just American, you’re just white, that’s all you are.” That in-and-of-itself is part of that act of rebellion and redefining who the hell I am, and that’s true for so many off-reservation Natives who have legitimate history among their tribe and yet are just cut off from it.

Karennahawi: ‘cuz I know, especially for me back home, there’s a lot of negativity on our reservation surrounding City Indians because, well, that term has a lot of negativity around it.

Chuch: On the West Coast, the term is “Urban Native.”

Karennahawi: Basically at home, it’s like, [City Indians] left because they wanted to better themselves. And then when they come back, it’s like, they’re all “whitewashed.” They’re not connected with their culture. So it’s seen as a negative thing, because it’s like, “Oh, well they left because they didn’t want to be Native.”

Chuch: And it’s a trap, right? That’s this fear of like, “Okay, if I try to do another thing, then I’m betraying my people, but if I stay among my people, then I’m being limited or perceived to be limited.” So what the hell are you to do? I mean, all y’all that chose to come to an American boarding school are very much living that experience of like, “I’m leaving home, I’m leaving that culture, but also, there’s a lot of benefits to this. What does that mean to keep my identity?”

Karennahawi: Yeah, and I think that was a big thing for me, especially because I grew up very traditional, like I went to a longhouse all the time, I still do, but I didn’t want to lose that part of myself. Because I never really understood why we view those City Indians as bad people. They wanted to better themselves. Why would we get mad at them for it?

Chuch: Totally. It is such a messed-up mind trick, right? I remember my first Faculty of Color meeting here, there were several faculty, who aren’t here anymore, who were very much like, “What the hell are you doing here?” It’s like, well, “I’m Native, this is my lived experience.” It becomes this other version of, not racism, but race relations. I’m allowed to still be who I am, even if you don’t perceive me the way that you think that I am perceived.

Karennahawi: Yeah, exactly.

Chuch: I don’t visibly present as Native, so I have the luxury—or the curse—of being able to be in a room and choose not to engage with my Nativeness. For a lot of our affinity groups, that’s not the case, right? As you walk in, Desahyne walks in, it’s like, “Oh, there’s a Native.” I’ve chosen to always engage with it. But [making a choice] is nothing that you could have ever done unless you start dyeing your hair and dressing differently and talking and doing everything differently, right?

Karennahawi: Do you ever, because me and Desahyne are very involved, and Niayla, do you ever really feel like left out?

Chuch: Yeah, I mean, I’ve got a degree of jealousy almost. I don’t have that access point to my culture that’s connected for millennia. My access point is me doing research and trying to learn about meeting people on my reservation and doing these courses. That’s also tied in with a lot of like, guilt or shame, where there were benefits with how I was able to be raised that maybe I’m taking for granted, and I’m like, “Oh, I wish I could have [been raised in a traditional setting], too.” Because that means a whole different life change, this weird balance.

Karennahawi: Yeah, and this is what makes me mad with people who are trying to be Native. It’s like there’s these different good aspects, like, sure we get a lot of funding when we go to school, but you don’t deal with being followed around a store.

Chuch: Oh, totally.

Karennahawi: Do you think that you would like to involve Capi with this stuff?

Chuch: Totally. So Capi is intentionally in our meetings all the time, right, to see we have a community here, we’re part of something else that’s more than just this preppy, white boarding school. My goal and hope is to continue to educate her on Potawatomi stuff as best as I can. I know infinitely more about it than my mother ever did. I hope that, if Capi so chooses, for her to feel the same about me. Like, “Yeah, Dad tried, but I have a better concept of this.”

The Economic and Social Impact of the Eras Tour

By MAGGIE PROVENCAL '25

Ready for it? Taylor Swift’s Eras tour is set to be the largest tour of all time. The tour has influenced Swift’s fans almost as much as it’s elevated the economy. “Taylor Swift Eras Tour is a once in a lifetime experience,” said Emily Chen ‘25 who attended one of her concert dates in June.

Chen and Zoe Wallace ‘25 both spent a substantial amount of money on their tickets to attend this groundbreaking show. Chen reported spending \$2,766 for two tickets, while Wallace spent \$5,000 for two tickets. “I would say the money I spent was worth it,” said Chen.

She justified this spending because she loves Taylor Swift as a songwriter, storyteller, and lyricist. Chen desperately wanted to see Swift live, because she loves singing. Likewise, Wallace said she was “a little bit embarrassed” because she spent “a stupid amount of money.” However, since she is a huge Taylor Swift Fan (also known as a Swiftie) and Swift is her favorite musical artist so she felt the money she spent on her tickets justified her attendance.

Wallace also talked about how the tour was an amazing experience because of the community of fans that were there with her. Wallace ‘26 said, “Swift’s community created at her tour was welcoming.” She ended up holding hands with a girl that she didn’t know because they traded their homemade friendship bracelets. The bracelets are symbolic of Swift’s lyrics in “Midnight” telling her fans to create friendship bracelets. Making and trading friendship bracelets with other fans at her concerts became a

tradition because of the lyrics, “So make the friendship bracelets, take the moment and taste it,” Swift’s Eras Tour Enchanted a fanbase of young people that look up to her as a person and a singer-songwriter.

Alongside the emotional impacts of the Eras Tour, it has also had a large financial influence. Sem Kim, the economics teacher at NMH, explains how a concert this large is a, “money multiplier.” This occurs when the money that people spend on tickets, ripples through the economy. It multiplies as people continue to spend money on the tickets. Swift has created an unprecedented amount of money multiplication. Her tour “stimulates the economy [as] it brings in money from outside local economies, due

to people traveling from far away,” Kim explains.

Her tour has also had an Electric Touch on the local economies of the cities where she performs. Swift’s ticket prices have soared to around \$500, which has caused many cities to want this Superstar to perform in their communities due to the increase in finance that comes alongside her presence.

If Swift happened to cancel a tour, the opposite of the multiplier effect would occur, as the immense money that was spent on the tour would be lost. Sem explains that this would cause, “A lot of money to be pulled out of the economy.” He said that local hotels, restaurants, caterers, vendors, and tour workers would lose money. A cancellation would cause, as Kim states, a “ripple down the line” effect, that would inevitably decline the financial status of the economy.

Swift has fearlessly influenced many people around the world through her Eras Tour. Not only does she inspire and influence people through her music, and connections that are fostered within her fanbase, but also in her performance’s economic influences. Students at NMH who were lucky enough to get their hands on tickets knew “All too Well” that they were expensive but felt like it was worth the price because they love Swift. The increase in revenue for Taylor Swift herself, the benefit of the tour on local economies, and the joy that her fans feel when seeing her live, will cause the Eras Tour to go down in history as a life changing concert.



Photo by YOONA JUNG '25



Photo by BENJAMIN ROSENTHAL '27.

Sometimes, a Smile is Just What You Need

By JUNSANG RYU '27

Big things come in small packages. Cecile Dela Cruz is a man of short stature, but he's one of the biggest people I've ever met. He expeditiously moves across the room, briskly arranging the newly arrived packages into order. He repeats this extensive and laborious process for another four hours. Like a cardboard package, he appears feeble yet is capable of great resilience.

Cecile first spoke with great weight and appeared serious during our first encounter. But this preconception turned out to be a mere judgment. He is always smiling, eager to hear what the other person has to say. Always keen and enthusiastic, he finds pleasure in assisting others.

"That will be \$6.79. How about that," says Cecile Dela Cruz as he returns his customer the small cardboard package he just received and places it on top of the counter. It's Cecile's job to not only help receive the packages, but also help people to send them from the school.

"I taught his daughter when she attended here, you know," says Mr. Nate Hemphill, the customer, also a teacher at NMH, when asked about his relationship with Cecile. "We go way back. We have known each other for nineteen years now. Cecile is a great man. He's always cheery and always helpful. He always makes me smile." Cecile bashfully turns his head away, gently laughing, and slightly blushes. "Stop it," he says.

"It's true Cecile. You are a great man and an amazing friend," says Leah Rowe, his only coworker at the mailcenter. "I have been working with him for almost three years now. He always has a smile on his face."

When I asked Cecile about how he is loved by everyone, he said, "Ha ha thank you. I'm trying. I

guess it's just me you know. I'm just a positive guy."

This is Cecile's nineteenth year of working at Northfield Mount Hermon School. "People wonder how I ended up in a small town like Northfield. It was in the late 80s, early 90s. We're working with this American family. Richard Muller '62. Muller is the American Consulate General in Hong Kong. Me and my wife were working with them. And in 1998, when Richard was retired from Hong Kong, he became a Head of the School here. He helped us to come to the United States and introduced us to NMH. So yeah, that's how it all started."

After working at the dining hall for fourteen years, Cecile has been running our school's mailroom ever since. He wanted to try something new, and the mailroom seemed to be a good option for him.

There seems to be an overload of boxes. The shelves are all full and many of them are placed on the floor. Cecile begins stacking the boxes on one side of the room so that there is enough space for him to move. The mailroom seems to be surprisingly more busy than I thought it would be. I wonder if it's because the school year has just started. I ask him whether it's like this everyday. "The first two weeks of school are the toughest weeks," says Cecile. "It's when the new students arrive from all over the world, and so it is for the packages. Every day, more than five hundred packages arrive. It's often two or three times more than a normal day during the first two weeks. It's because people order things like blankets, dorm supplies, and books. Amazon is the top supplier. They bring in about 70 to 150 packages every day. The rest of the companies like UPS and FedEx are around 50 or so every day."

The drivers usually help unload the packages

from the back of the truck, placing them on top of the metal rack located behind the mailroom. "We appreciate their tremendous help very much. I can't simply thank them enough," says Cecile. It is then Cecile's job to take them inside the mailroom and place them on top of a long wooden table, where Leah is ready to sort them into categories. All of the parcels are first scanned to identify the receiver's name. Then, they are labeled with the mailbox number in accordance. The place is like a well-structured assembly factory.

I tell him that I want to help. I ask him if he could teach me how the system works.

"So if you have a package that's labeled, you're gonna get a slip and put those inside their mailboxes. Okay? Then place the packages on the shelves according to their number. The red slips are for the boxes. Anything smaller than that, like a package, is a white slip. You just put them in the mailbox of the person that has gotten a package. Boxes that are larger and don't fit on the shelves are labeled with blue slips. We have a separate space over there to contain them," says Cecile as he points to the back of the mailroom. There already seems to be several boxes that don't fit on the shelves. Some appear to be frames, furniture, or even ice-hockey sticks.

"The slips are one of the very first things I did ever since taking over the job here at the mailroom. Originally, the paper slips would get damaged every two days or so and we didn't have enough supply. So I decided to laminate the slips," he says as he proudly shows the extra paper slips that aren't cut out and are ready to get laminated. He's like a little kid trying to show his parents the drawing he did at school. There's a grin on his face; a mixture of shyness and pride.

Cecile goes off to get the newly arrived packages and starts swiftly organizing them according to their mailbox numbers. This process of laborious toil continues for more than thirty minutes. Once the other trucks arrive (UPS, FedEx, etc.), the equivalent process recurs.

I decide to stay a little longer and wait until the other trucks arrive. UPS, FedEx, and DHL are still the ones to come. "Usually, they all arrive before 12:30. They are a little late today," says Cecile.

As we wait, the Northfield Community Radio Channel plays in the background. Despite most of them being "new" songs, Cecile knows the melody to all of them. He starts casually whistling to Maroon 5's "Memories" and calls me over. "Junsang! Come here. Check this out." As I approach him, I see a flock of thank-you-cards stuck on top of his table. Many of them are from the students and teachers, but there are also a lot from past alumni. "People send me thank-you-cards after they graduate. Sometimes for my birthday and sometimes for no reason," says Cecile. I scan the letters. One of them reads, "You've always made my day." Another says, "I miss your smile."

A couple minutes later, the UPS truck arrives. Cecile opens the backdoor, places the wooden wedge door stopper, and heads off to unload the hundred-fifty cardboard boxes. "You can help me place the packages on the shelves according to their box number," says Cecile. Small packages with no

cardboard packaging go below the shelves, and all the other boxes go on them. I take a box at a time. Cecile takes four. The process feels like a good twenty-minute workout, no gym needed. "It makes you stronger!" Cecile exclaims.

"Water tastes different here you know," he says with pure delight and pride after finishing sorting the last package. I take a sip. It's better than Coke. "There is nothing better than a cup of cold water after a tough period of hard work," he adds. Cecile seems to be happy about the smallest things in life. Such insignificant moments in his day are sources of significant happiness for him.

"Hi Cecile!" says a tall student wearing an NMH Soccer t-shirt as he enters the door. It's the first thing he says, even before stepping in the mailroom.

"I'm doing great. How are you doing man?" replies Cecile. Both are grinning. "I know there is no slip in my mailbox, but can you just double check if there is a package under my name?" asks the student.

"Sure," Cecile says as he heads to the shelf located on the left side of the mailroom. "Nope. Nothing here. Try coming back tomorrow."

"Alright, see you tomorrow!"

"It's always fun to see the excitement in the kids' faces when they enter the mailroom. I mean, there is nothing possibly more exciting than receiving your package after a week of waiting, right?" he says after the student leaves. There is a spark in his eye;

a sign of love.

Whenever a college sends the students acceptance letters and packages, Cecile is always the first one to receive them. Oftentimes, he's also the man the students are most excited about to share this good news. He says that they come running in eager for him to hear the news. "I'm excited for these kids, you know. Especially if you get accepted to the college that you really like. That's a big deal. Alright. Hi! One moment please." Without even asking what the student's box number is, Cecile casually heads to the opposite side of the room to pick up her package. "To me, the first thing that comes to my mind when I see someone is their mailbox number. I mean, that's natural. Right? After all, that's what I do every day."

I ask him whether his job ever feels repetitive. He pauses for a moment, then answers. "Every time I come in here, I'm ready. I'm ready to do whatever comes up. That's my mindset. Doesn't matter what day it is. I'm ready to tackle everything and to cheer people on and make sure that they get served."

"Here you go. Have a nice day!" he then says as he hands the student her package. "I can't express how happy I am every day interacting with the students. They make me smile. But they say that it's my smile that makes them smile. I don't know. I really don't know man. Sometimes, a smile is just what you need!"

Run Like Nobody's Watching

By MICHELLE TANG '26

"Runners are made when no one else is watching," wrote John L. Parker Jr. in the book "Once a Runner." His words echo within a team of girls as they jog through the New England landscape under the warm glow of four o'clock sunshine, facing the soothing breezes from up the hills.

They are the NMH girls cross country team, as introduced on the school website, "a tight-knit group of runners who work hard and have plenty of fun." The current team consists of a diverse group of girls from different backgrounds, each with varying levels of running experience. The team trains from Monday to Friday, regardless of the burning sun and pouring rain, and competes in weekly races against other schools.

Cross country is a sport that attracts people for multiple reasons, as it not only offers a fun experience of running outdoors with nature, but also satisfies those in pursuit of building up endurance and strengthening one's body.

When asked why they choose to do cross country, runners respond with enthusiasm. "Running is my outlet for stress," said Liesl Barry '26, a second-year member of the team. "I know I have potential, and I want to see how far I can reach."

Barry's determination was not uncommon in the team. "I was told that cross country is a mentally tough and demanding sport," said Skylar Tian '25, who is currently in her third year of doing cross country. "So I came with a very determined mindset that I am going to run and not going to stop."

As a sport, cross country is unique in many ways. "On one hand, you are trained and scored as a team. Yet, you can be one mile into the race and find yourself all alone in the woods," said Coach Barry Austern. "It is really about how to push yourself when

no one is watching."

According to Austern, once runner's leave the starting line, they are completely on their own. "You don't have a bleacher of fans cheering for you, you are not in a gym filled with spectators. It's you, the woods, and your opponent thirty feet ahead of you. It is a mental battle as much as a physical battle."

"You would always want to stop, and you have to constantly combat that feeling," said Bryanna May '26, a second-year member of the team. "You need to stay with yourself and remember what you are set out to do, and try to catch whoever is in front of you."

It is such mental challenges and physical hardships that characterize the cross country team. Yet, it is precisely the difficulty of cross country that enables the courage, effort, and perseverance of our runners to shine so brightly. When asked how she motivates herself, Tian responded, "No matter what, don't stop. It is a bottom line that I set for myself that keeps me going. On hard days, I remind myself that I want to be in pain right now so I will be able to enjoy the fulfillment later."

"The moment of passing the finish line gives the best feeling ever. That is something that I keep in mind when the training gets hard," said Barry "I persevere to feel like I accomplished something."

As a tough but tremendously rewarding sport, the experience of running cross country brings profound lessons to those who put in the effort. The mental toughness and the ability to push oneself through adversity developed through cross country will follow one for the rest of life.

"Knowing that I can persevere and keep on going when things get hard helped me in school life and social life," said Tian, "It is about getting into

the habit of not stopping. Every time you combat the urge to stop and keep running, you become stronger and more resilient."

When asked to comment on the current team, members expressed confidence and their faith in each other.

"This team is the strongest that I have seen in a while," said Barry. "Everyone is dedicated to the sport and trying their best."

"They are so strong and supportive," said Ceylan Kutman '26, a new member. "Everyone encourages each other, especially when things get hard."

Despite the competency of the cross country team, there are only two goals Austern has for the girls: "Number one, have fun. And Number two, be healthy." He explained, "I wouldn't set any other goals because I don't want to set a limit for the girls. To be successful in many other sports you better be tall and big, but in cross country, if you have the willingness to push yourself and the ability to tolerate discomfort, you are gonna be a good racer. I see amazing runners come in all shapes and sizes."

Indeed, for cross country runners, the only limit one has is oneself.

As Tian said, life itself is like running one's own race unstopingly. You need to pace yourself well, and try not to get worn out at the beginning and keep going. The mental toughness and the ability to push oneself through adversity developed through the sport will follow one for the rest of life.

As Allie Ostrander, the famous American long-distance runner, once said: if runners can cross the finish line knowing they have done everything to prepare and execute the race to the best of their ability, one can be proud, regardless of the result.

Everyone Saw the Kiss at Women's World Cup. What Happens Now?

By ESA BLUME '25



Photo by YOONA JUNG '25.

On August 20, 2023, the Spanish Women's National Football Team won the Women's World Cup. While this was a momentous event, it came crashing down when Luis Rubiales, the former President of Spain's National Soccer Federation, non-consensually kissed Spanish soccer player Jennifer Hermoso. While this has obviously been affecting women's sports, how is it affecting women in sports?

Grace Sokolow, the girls' varsity soccer coach at NMH, shared her reaction to the incident: "To be completely honest, I wasn't surprised... We have normalized the abuse of women in our sports and we really haven't had conversations on what moving forward looks like until very recently."

Abuse has been abundant in women's sports, especially since there are usually major power dynamics between coaches and players. Sokolow said that it can be difficult for female soccer players to speak up about abuse because there are abusive managers and coaches who control most aspects of a player's life. "There are moments where you choose the complicity of silence for your own good," Sokolow said. Similarly, Isabelle Eaton-Neubert '25, a player on the girls' varsity soccer team, said, "I was confused about why Rubiales felt like that was the right choice to make in the moment. I felt upset and sad for what it must have been like for Jennifer Hermoso right at that moment."

While similar incidents have happened to many different women in the past, this one is significant because it happened on live television. "We all saw it... there was no way to spin it," Sokolow said.

The Spanish women's national team has invested time and effort into becoming successful at soccer, "and [they] still couldn't have one day without some guy treating [female athletes] like an object and not an athlete."

The fact that people are speaking out against Rubiales' behavior, Sokolow said, is a "gigantic

leap forward from where we were even two years ago." She thinks that the number of instances of abuse we are now hearing about in female sports isn't because abuse is going up; it means "the confidence to speak and to believe that there could be action that results from that speech is up."

As for the effect on women in general, Eaton-Neubert said, "I think this event set us back a bit from reaching gender equity." She also explained how women worldwide, in sports or otherwise, who know about the incident are most likely disheartened by it. However, she noted that the re-

sponse from those demanding that Luis Rubiales step down from his position serves as a motivator for women to "demand better." Eaton-Neubert hopes that this incident will show people "the importance of respecting women in sports and that the value of their craft is equal to that of any man."

To spur the process of achieving equity in women's sports, Sokolow said that we as a community can start by believing women when they talk about their experiences of being a woman, whether that's in sports or in general. There are also changes in our speech that can help change the way women's and girls' sports are viewed. Phrases that put down women's and girls' sports and make it seem as though they are just "junior varsity" versions of male sports are all too common. For example, sayings like "you play like a bunch of girls!" make it seem as though women's and girls' sports are lesser than men's and boys' sports. Sokolow said we need to begin to "believe that women's sports and girls' sports should be respected for the games that they are, not just as versions of the men's and boy's games."

Sokolow doesn't approach soccer or her team any differently because the incident wasn't new to her. "It was our lived reality, to which y'all happened to pay attention to... this time," Sokolow said. "We have a lot of work to do when it comes to consent."

On September 10, 2023, Rubiales publicly announced that he would be stepping down from his position as the Spanish Soccer President. While this is a step in the right direction, abuse is still prevalent in women's sports and we as a community need to be vigilant to prevent similar instances from happening.

"As a female soccer player who cares a lot about the sport and my team," Eaton-Neubert said, "it scares me to think that this or something similar could happen to me or one of my teammates in the future."



Photo by YOONA JUNG '25.

Here's Why You Should Adopt From A Puppy Mill

By MACKENZIE HARTNELL '27

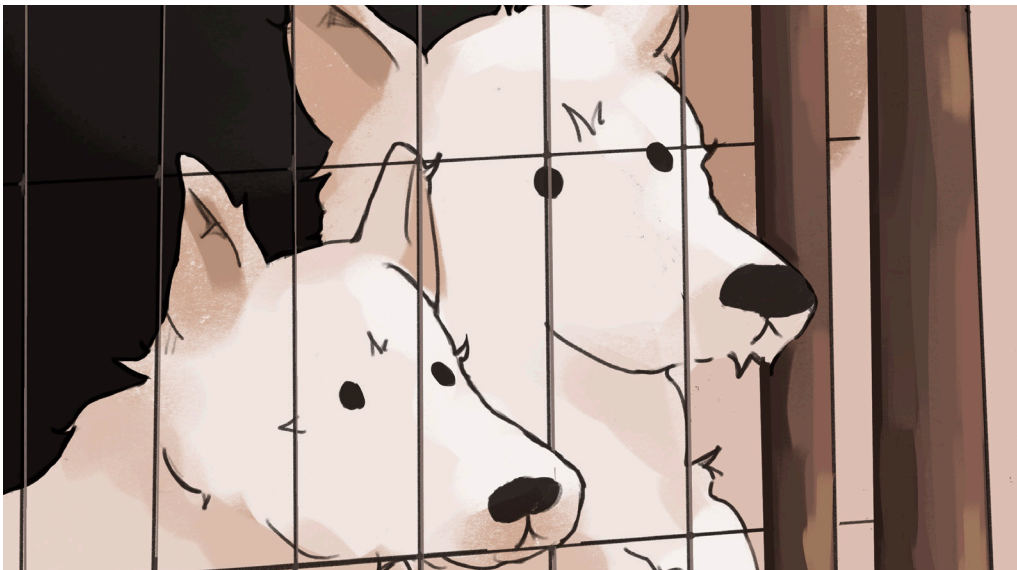


Illustration by FIONA CUTCHINS '25.

Every year, two million dogs die in puppy mills. Does this mean someone should adopt a puppy from a puppy mill? Actually, not intentionally. In my case, I did adopt a puppy from a puppy mill, but not on purpose.

Puppy mills are places that breed and reproduce dogs for profit. Many of these dogs are beaten and are given food and water that is often crawling with insects like maggots. Dogs can be infected with worms, fleas and ticks. Crowded, dirty cages are filthy with urine, excrement, bacteria, and mold. Puppies are frequently ill and poorly fed. Many puppy mills consist of many outdoor cages with no protection from the weather.

My dog, Kipper, who arrived by plane at Bradley International Airport is a puppy mill puppy. Kipper is a Bolo, an all-white dog. He was filthy and very malnourished from how his previous owners had treated him. Once we saw his condition, we rushed him to the nearest vet. The vet explained that I had purchased him from a puppy mill owner pretending to be a reliable breeder. Kipper was a traumatized dog who was scared of the smallest things. He would be scared of a pin drop, a dropped car key, a door closed too hard, or the telephone ringing. When he was afraid he would get growly. The vet suggested that I should consider euthanizing him because his aggression would only get worse.

It's autumn and some families might be thinking of getting a new puppy for Christmas. But buying animals for holidays is never a smart idea. A pet is a family member and a long term investment in time and care. A puppy isn't a toy. You have to love your puppy, feed and groom your puppy, train your puppy and take your puppy out a lot if you don't want your parents yelling at you about the rug. A puppy isn't something you put in a stocking and hang from the mantle. They're more like four legged babies.

During the holidays, people will do anything for money. People who could hate animals could end up being the people selling you your future pet. Animal adoption in the US, According to an ad on newsweek.com, 90.5 million households in Ameri-

ca have pets and 6.5 million animals enter shelters each year. Of the animals going into shelters, about 3.1 million of the animals are dogs. Twenty-five percent of the adopted dogs are puppies.

However, not enough people buy pets from shelters. In 2020 alone, 920,000 cats and dogs were killed in shelters. I can't say enough about adopting pets from shelters and avoiding places like pet stores. In pet shops, 90% of the puppies come from puppy mills. Puppy mills also sometimes advertise online and in some classified ads.

Thanks to the staff down at the Dakin Humane Society, Springfield, MA, they have given some advice for this. A staff member said "before you buy the puppy from a potential mill, you should do some deeper research into the place and try to find any red flags and to see what kind of dog it is. You could also ask to visit the facility to make sure that the person isn't lying when they say that the puppies are raised with their family in their house. Asking for the parents of the puppies can be helpful as well. Ask to meet the mother and the father of the puppy. If the puppy is really a purebred dog, they should have registration papers for the mother and father, too. If the breeder is a fake they will just make excuses about why you can't see the mother (who is probably locked in a tiny cage somewhere). Two suspicious signs of a puppy mill are when the person says that they are selling the puppies on behalf of someone they know, or an agent and when they ask no questions and just ask for payment. These are people who don't want you to see the living conditions of the mother and don't care what happens to the puppy once you take it away. They just want your money. Many puppies come from the same agency and in large quantities. Some puppy mills also advertise their puppies as "rescue dogs" in order to get more sales. People will sometimes pay high prices to fake rescue groups thinking they are doing a good deed rescuing a puppy when they are really just giving money to a puppy mill owner.

What is interesting is that puppy mills are not illegal in the US and as many as "2.6 million pup-

pies from puppy mills are sold each year" according to k9 of mine. The Humane Society of the US estimates "there are about 10,000 puppy mills in the US". The greatest number of puppy mills are in the state of Missouri.

According to paws.org, only "15% of people adopt puppies from shelters". You would think they would only find mutts there, but it turns out a quarter of them are pure bred. Furthermore, according to humanesociety.org there are "more than 3,500 animal shelters in the US". If using a breeder is necessary, you should know there are about 9,000 animal breeders in the USA but only about 2,000 of them are licensed. Of the ones that are licensed, not even 75% get inspected. This means that a lot of animals are suffering.

A little bit more about suffering and my dog Kipper. Kipper did survive his infections, but he didn't turn out exactly normal because of his abuse at the puppy mill. He is always anxious and easily frightened. When he was younger, he would run out of the room if someone dropped an m&m on the floor. Sheer terror! He has a very real fear of mops and brooms or anything that's a long stick. He also has a physical deformity and life-threatening health problems. He has a brain tumor called a GME. He is on chemotherapy, but we don't know how long it will keep him alive.

We contacted the "breeder" and it turned out that while she did have a family and dogs on her farm, Kipper actually came out of a cage probably locked in a darkened shed and was never actually inside the "breeder's" house playing with her grandchildren, as the story went. After contacting the Bichon Bolognese Rescue Society, it turned out that this woman was actually under investigation by federal authorities for animal cruelty and was put out of business two years later in the state of Indiana. The Bichon Bolognese Rescue Society had taken out a Facebook page campaigning against her.

Puppy mills raise puppies in poor living conditions. This leads to some behavioral problems later on such as not getting along with other pets in the house, fighting with other dogs, not getting along with strangers, or being aggressive towards children. Millions of them die in captivity because they are treated poorly.

So if you end up with a puppy mill dog like Kipper, you have definitely saved a life. If you find out you have a puppy mill puppy, you can complain about the person at the puppy mill and try to shut them down. Kipper is my dog and he is very loyal to my family. He barks every time I get out of the car to go to school. On the other hand, he doesn't like to be pet and he refuses to be held. He isn't what you would call affectionate. For a small breed dog known for companionship, Kipper isn't exactly that. You would want to avoid adopting a Kipper. Believe me, I know. You don't want a 14 pound fluffy white "watch dog" with a brain tumor and cancer. But I love him a lot, and he deserves to have a good life. If you want to take action against puppy mills. Please see the article "Seven Ways to Stop Puppy Mills", which can be found on humanesociety.org.

From Class to Court: The New Pickleball and Volleyball Courts Are Bringing NMH Together

By DAMON TUNG '25

It's 1:50 on a Thursday. Students leave class as C block ends to enjoy their 35-minute break between classes. Nabeel 24' sprints to the pickleball courts, grabs his go-to racket, and prepares for a quick matchup with his friend, Daniel 24', to relieve the stress from AP Stats. It's a scorching hot fall day, though that won't stop them from playing, even after dinner.

The recent addition of the pickleball and volleyball courts near Hayden Hall has quickly become a popular hub for weekend activities and social gatherings. Pickleball and volleyball's simple rules, intensive gameplay, and fun competitive edge make them games that appeal to a wide range of students. Pickleball, making its first appearance at Northfield Mount Hermon, has proven to be a fan favorite. Students gather during X Block, after school, and before dinner; the courts are almost never empty. According to Rick Hendrickson, the school's director of athletics, "There was a demand for pickleball and an acknowledgment that it would be a well-used addition to our student recreational area." He was correct!

However, despite the enthusiasm around these two facilities, the question arises: might there have been other beneficial uses for the money? We all know sleeping in a dorm during the 85°F autumn days is nearly impossible. Some students have expressed questions about whether the funds could have been used to install air conditioning in Crossley, to bring back the beloved stir-fry bar, or even refurbish Beveridge Hall classrooms.

Hendrickson said that Brian Hargrove, the head of school, is the lead on strategic review for new facilities; however, many school shareholders are also a part of this collaborative process.

Faculties and athletes shared their perspectives on these new facilities. Leopold 26', a top placer in the recent Pickleball tournament at school, commented, "I think that the courts are a great way to bond within the community...I see a lot of students and teachers meeting new friends and talking to new people." Bill Roberts, head coach of the Tennis team, stated that the Pickleball courts are a great method for students to develop a new hobby. Furthermore, he stresses that it is crucial for them

to utilize their passion as a "getaway." Paeto 25', a prominent member of the Varsity Volleyball team, emphasized how the new courts have fostered increased student interactions and provide a fresh setting for practice: "The court is a great opportunity for kids to socialize and for volleyball lovers to play. It also provides our team members with a new training location!"

These new additions have proven to be a popular hangout spot for students looking to relax and interact. However, the debate about how the school's finances are allocated is justified, especially when certain facilities fall short. While many students love the courts, it's essential for the school to balance the benefits of recreational spaces against other pressing needs and that future decisions should be accountable for all aspects of student well-being. So whether you're perfecting your offensive spike shot or an ace that'll win you your next match, it's crucial for us as students to keep the courts in check and, most importantly, have fun!

"There was a demand for pickleball and an acknowledgment that it would be a well-used addition to our student recreational area."

He was correct!



Photo by JACOB YANG '24.

Forbidden Worlds: America's surge in banned books

By EMILY LIU '27

Growing up, NMH's head librarian Beth Ruane read any book she could get her hands on. Adults in her childhood never thought to restrain her from reading specific books. Yet, now, individuals, school administrators, and local government authorities ban children from reading "offensive" or "inappropriate" books.

Book banning has been around for centuries, and it often involved a power dynamic. As mentioned by Freedom to Read from the Book and Periodical Council, in 1885, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* was not featured in a Massachusetts library because it was considered "rough, coarse and inelegant, dealing with a series of experiences not elevating..." Respectable and wealthy people had the power to decide that the book did not provide a good model for their children to read. During the Jim Crow era in 1959, segregationists banned *The Rabbit's Wedding* by Garth Williams because it depicted a black bunny marrying a white bunny, which contradicted their beliefs of anti-interracial marriage. The white segregationists used book banning to reduce the opposing opinion and gain support for their beliefs.

In the present day, parents and school administrators are the powers behind the surge in banned books. An article published by Columbia University explains that the American "curriculum has always been political..." Book banning is a way for parents

and school officials to choose what is taught in the curriculum based on their personal views on politics, race, and gender. In more conservative parts of the country, book banners target books about the LGBTQ+ community and people of color. On the other hand, in liberal parts of the country, book banners ban books for anti-racism ideas. Children in the communities are not well served because their views are biased, which causes them to not be familiar with the diverse ideas of the world.

The excuse for banning books now, according to the American Library Association (ALA) Office for Intellectual Freedom, is "...to protect others, frequently children, from difficult ideas and information". However, Humanities teacher Pete Masteller thinks that children should be exposed to banned books and, "a lot of times the banned books are the most interesting books to read." Beth Ruane also comments, "Challenging topics are challenging which is why they should be talked about...I think that we are really well served when we read books that introduce us to new themes. I think it enhances our empathy, I think it makes us more curious and compassionate."

Pat Harris, Humanities 1 and Queer Lives Literature teacher, shares that the experiences of marginalized people are the stories worth reading. These stories help bring another perspective to biased

communities and offer an insight to struggles that society rarely brings up. People see their lives represented in the books they read, and allowing marginalized people to share their stories also provides comfort to those with similar experiences.

Raising awareness about banned books is the first step for ending this censorship. Resources like the ALA and certain local libraries are just a few organizations that are working towards freeing speech in books. The American Library Association created Banned Books Week, which is a week dedicated to promoting awareness of censorship and book banning. This year, it was celebrated from October 1 to October 7. NMH participated in Banned Books Week by displaying popular banned books in the library. Alexis Arcaro also sent an email to students about banned books which included a quiz for how many classic banned books one has read.

In addition, Beth Ruane commented that raising awareness in one week is not enough. Readers should be attentive to events promoting banned books year round. events promoting banned books year round.

So, the next time you visit Schauffler Library, feel free to ask a librarian about banned books worthy of reading and enjoy the adventure of diving into a forbidden world.



Photo by SARAH JANG '24.

The Dual Nature of Chat GPT

By SARAH PARK '27

In mere seconds, before I finish writing this sentence, ChatGPT, the free artificial intelligence program, will effortlessly spit out a 500-word essay delving into the intricacies of neurobiology. It is considered one of the fastest-growing apps in internet history; this extraordinary tool can comprehend and respond to our natural language, bridging the gap between humans and machines. As ChatGPT blurs the boundaries between technological innovations and ethical considerations, it has ignited controversial debates.

Debates about the role of ChatGPT in the educational field often lean towards its potential harm, especially in facilitating cheating and undermining genuine learning. Nevertheless, it's essential to recognize that this AI tool serves a dual purpose. In the right circumstances, it can become a valuable resource for students and teachers.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that this AI tool has a dual nature; it can actually be a valuable ally to students and educators under the right circumstances.

I interviewed three people, two teachers, and one friend, about their thoughts on ChatGPT. All three had similar views on this tool's positive and negative sides.

Pete Masteller, my religious studies and philosophy teacher, offers a viewpoint demonstrating this

issue's complexity. Masteller understands that navigating the landscape of AI assistance can be tricky. However, he quickly emphasizes that ChatGPT is not just a tool but a game-changer for students. According to Masteller, "Certainly, there are cases where ChatGPT can be incredibly helpful. For instance, students can use it to write computer code in a fraction of the time it would take them manually. Some teachers intentionally use it as a teaching tool, and it can even provide an initial overview of a topic." To put it simply, Masteller emphasizes that ChatGPT isn't just a helpful resource; it makes daunting tasks more straightforward for students.

My English teacher, Pat Harris, highlights the importance of voice and how students should go through a "healthy struggle" in writing. He believes students should experience authentic writing and not rely on ChatGPT for their assignments. However, even in this perspective, there is room for ChatGPT to shine. He acknowledges, "It can be useful for understanding formulaic writing and critiquing reasoning, serving as a teaching aid." ChatGPT is an assistant in this context, guiding students toward better writing practices.

Imogen Perrin '27 offers her perspective on the benefits of ChatGPT. Although she primarily uses it for creative activities, such as generating stories, there are areas where ChatGPT can assist students.

Imogen shares, "ChatGPT could be beneficial in giving ideas on how to start an essay, how to structure it, or even responding to texts efficiently."

Her experience highlights the versatility of ChatGPT in assisting students in various tasks, from sparking creativity in writing to offering practical help with organization.

Our school community's dynamic range of opinions highlights how technology and education work together. What's consistently emphasized in all the interviews is that ChatGPT can be a significant asset to students in their learning journey. It complements traditional learning methods rather than replacing them entirely, illustrating how technology can aid without diminishing the value of conventional learning. By emphasizing the positive attributes of ChatGPT, we can work towards dispelling any negative associations with this tool.

ChatGPT, while controversial, has a multifaceted role in education. It can be a powerful tool, offering valuable assistance in teaching, providing initial overviews of topics, and aiding students in their writing endeavors. When used responsibly and ethically, ChatGPT has the potential to enhance education rather than hinder it.

An Unending Wait For A Stamp on My Passport

By ROSE WU '25

My brother didn't want a gap year. Yet I watched him be forced into a gap year for the first semester of university because he couldn't attain a visa. He was supposed to leave for Rome for a study-abroad program his university offered at the same time I left home for NMH. His university in Boston did not issue him an American F-1 visa for his first semester because of his travel program to Rome. However, in order to attain an Italian visa, he had to go to Boston. Stuck in this Catch-22 situation, all he could do at the airport was stare at his red, non-U.S. passport, a passport that granted him entry to America four years ago, but was now bereft of that privilege. I stared back down at my passport too, wondering if one day I may not be able to return: if a leave in the summer would be a leave forever.

The increasing challenges of attaining American F-1 and tourist visas are directly affecting many international students around the world. In the past few years, covid was the biggest factor in drastically changing international students' chances of entry. However, as covid slowly declined, and borders began teeming with visitors again, a new difficulty around obtaining visas began to emerge: competition. Competition made the choice of applying for a tourist visa for my brother impossible. Due to the sheer number of applicants, the embassy effectively stripped his visa opportunity away after announcing a seven-month wait-time for a tourist

visa.

Competition accelerated in 2023, when many countries with a large number of international students reopened their borders for travel, including China, India, South Korea, Canada, Brazil, Vietnam, and Japan (Boundless). Due to this grand reopening, U.S. embassies became flooded with applicants all around the world. In GuangZhou, China, for example, only five open windows everyday for interviews at the U.S. embassy signaled a seemingly eternal wait time for applicants. Now the lines have gotten even longer, with hundreds or even thousands of applicants traveling to certain cities to reach a U.S. embassy. There are even stories of students going to neighboring countries for a shorter visa waiting time.

It might be hard for local students to imagine the nervousness that comes along with the visa application process. Although, according to Tami Brunelle, the faculty in charge of NMH's international students' visas, there have been no students in NMH that have had particular difficulties with their visas, there are many international students that have encountered stressful visa situations. There is actual training from intermediary agencies on how to answer visa questions, how to present oneself during an interview, what information to offer and what to hide. Agents will tell students:

- Do not express any intention of becoming an American citizen
- Do not volunteer information if it's not asked,
- If you have family in the U.S, don't mention them.

These are all hoops we have to jump through just for a stamp on our passports, for a nod at the customs, and for a sense of confidence as we step off the plane.

Yet the stamp, the nod, and the confidence are harder and harder to acquire. With the number of students choosing to go overseas skyrocketing, and lines of applicants doubling and tripling in size over the past couple of years, U.S. visas are slowly becoming a costly document to have. There are people paying thousands for scalpers, inflating plane tickets, and multiple intermediary agencies, all just for a shorter waiting time in the embassy, just for a higher chance of seeing one's picture under the title of "Approved Visa from the United States of America." Still today, I feel a sense of validation, a feeling of assertion as I see my visa neatly stamped in my passport. I wonder, as competition grows, if I could be standing in the very line I dread with an expired visa, wishing I could have a never-terminable visa in this sea of competition.



Photo by AUGGIE SWARTHOOD '24.

A Glimpse into Chiles Theatre: The Production of Les Misérables

By IZZY CADENA '25

Les Misérables (*Les Mis*) is a title you're probably familiar with, whether or not you're theater-inclined. The main conflict in *Les Mis* occurs between former convict John Valjean, on his quest for redemption, and Javert, a relentless police officer. As the play progresses, many other characters of critical importance emerge as well.

Les Mis is considered by many to be an intense watch set against the tumultuous backdrop of social unrest in 19th-century France. Jared Eberlein, the Northfield Mount Hermon School (NMH) Theater Director, became enthralled with it at a young age. Eberlein speaks of his enduring affection for the "sweeping emotionality" of the play. *Les Mis* is an entirely sung-through production, which makes this a commonly held sentiment, as audiences feel a unique connection with the musical aspect of the play. Eberlein even admits to owning the tape, cassette tape, and CD editions of the album.

Eberlein shares that *Les Mis* is a massive production for NMH to take on, as it is "ridiculously hard." He was initially hesitant to put on this play, due to its incredibly large scale – requiring complex character understandings, musical renditions, and immense technical efforts. Impressively, this did not dissuade the theater department. Eberlein

recounts how students "passionately spearheaded the idea of taking on the show," and saw it as an exciting challenge.

An immense amount of effort is being put in behind the curtain of Chiles Theatre. Eberlein comments on the "stellar" investment of the cast and crew. Rigel Velez '25, who is portraying the critical character of Javert, despite this being his first time participating in a musical production, shares that they have "a lot to tie together in a few weeks." An impressive level of commitment is required from the actors of this play. Actress Jasper Neff '25 affirmed this in her description of their in-depth character work, where they must establish the "backstory and motivations" for each role, as well as how they "interact with each other." These efforts are reflected by Eberlein's goal to inspire "genuine impetus" for creative decisions, rather than "relying on some other actor's work."

Within the complex and eventful storyline of *Les Mis*, unmistakable themes of social justice emerge and can be interpreted as insightful commentary on lasting societal ills. Eberlein wonders if Victor Hugo, the author of the book, was almost "prophetic" in his examination of oppressive social structures and the way they manifest in poverty, food insecurity, and the marginalization of women.

All of these themes remain incredibly pervasive in a modernized "global sense."

Les Mis closely examines the journey of characters marginalized by oppressive social structures and depicts how they strive to overcome these confines. Regardless of their success in this strife, they are powerfully emblematic of the indomitable human spirit. Neff observes how *Les Mis* depicts "human resilience" in the face of "structures working against them." Velez explains that although his character acts as a "symbol of government," he simultaneously encounters his own internal conflicts through the struggle of adhering to a set of moral principles. The multifaceted nature of these characters demonstrates exactly what makes *Les Mis* so compelling.

Topics of nuanced and interconnected power dynamics are incredibly relevant in this volatile modern-day political climate. *Les Mis* offers the audience a chance to deeply understand these concepts – providing them with everlasting insights and various new perspectives. Eberlein shares that his goal for this production is to have the audience view "hardship" through the "removed lens" of theater, and *Les Mis* does just that.



Lamplighter

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