

# WHO ARE YOU WHISTLING AT?

Feminist Club leaders launch anti-harrassment campaign

SOPHIE YOUNG  
Staff Writer

You walk down the hallway and suddenly feel the sting. It's like a slap across the face, a shove from behind, a yank of your hair. You're trying to get to class, so you keep walking. But then you feel it again. Words that cling and claw at your back. You try to ignore it, ignore them. You turn the corner into an empty hallway and they follow behind you. It's just the two of you alone. Do you turn to say something or walk quickly to class?

Sexual harassment, or unwanted sexual advances or remarks, plagues high schools like ours, but the issue is often not faced. Founders of the Feminist Club, Seniors Rachael Veldman, Allison Daniel, and Amanda Garcia, have gained the confidence and courage to acknowledge and educate the high school campus.

The problematic environment of the halls is faced every morning and afternoon, during and between all seven classes. American

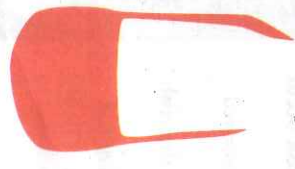
History, Government, Economics, and Psychology teacher and Feminist Club sponsor Mark Chapman sees the problems students face in terms of sexual harassment at the school.

"The situation in the hallways is at best problematic. Sometimes it's downright hostile," Chapman said. "Constantly you see boys inappropriately touching girls. I know that a lot of those girls don't want that to be happening. They don't feel comfortable saying leave me alone or they don't feel like the boy is going to listen."

This situation is what inspired the club's founders to start a campaign for awareness of the issue. Their goal is to inform the public that the current state of the halls is not okay and acknowledge that the problem is only the first step. Garcia was introduced to the problem by another teacher.

"We spoke to Ms. Segal, the yearbook teacher," Garcia said.

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Annie Tao

Notty Wei (left) and some political



Hannah Kazmouz

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The musicians have been working on their holiday music since the beginning of October. Since the Chamber Orchestra was performing, beginner and veteran students alike were placed into the spotlight on the stage. "Some of the kids in that class are just beginners," Reynosa said. "They've only been playing since September, so we're joining them together into one giant orchestra for

musicians rested for ten before show time. They returned to their seats came to the front of the introduced the ensemble violinists, cellists and She raised her baton that the first song was and "A Celtic Christmas by Brian Balmages throughout the auditor Senior Bravyn Lu acc

## Santa hats and red-nosed reindeer p

KAYLA WASHINGTON  
Staff Writer

The Orchestra Concert and Piano Recital programs brought winter to the auditorium for the second Winter Concert on Dec. 3. The Chamber Orchestra played holiday medleys, and pianists performed classic solos and duets. The melodic strings of different sounds all came to be one and

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## News

Immigrant

...a Day



## Breast cancer luncheon stirs awareness for patients at Ben Taub hospital

KATE JONES AND  
CORAL GOLDSTEIN  
Staff Writer

Pink! Ribbons, cupcakes, tablecloths, and more at Breast Cancer Awareness Club's luncheon. At an event the Italian club sold noodles, cupcakes and drinks, and the club gained money to donate to fund cancer boxes for patients at Ben Taub hospital, a top-rated hospital in the Houston area. With music and a pinked out multipurpose room, the atmosphere was lively and exciting when students filed in to pick up their lunch.

Included with the donation of \$8 was a choice of spaghetti or various kinds of alfredo pasta with a roll, salad and a vanilla or chocolate cupcake. Students sat at tables and chatted as they enjoyed their meal and club officers sold, collected and raised additional money for charity by offering an additional cupcake for \$1.

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It was undeniable that the opposition's ad campaign towards HERO as an act that would increase sexual assault in bathrooms had an effect on the voting's outcome. Junior and chairman of the Young Republicans Leadership Council Timothy Wei shared his thoughts on the advertisements.

"Harris County is actually a swing county, sometimes it's blue, and sometimes it's red," Wei said. "The fact that 62 percent voted against HERO shows the effectiveness of the ad."

While the advertisements were effective, supporters of HERO were quick to point out the flaws in the opposition's attack. Pre-AP and Academic English 1 teacher and GSA sponsor Elizabeth Chapman explained the situation.

"HERO would not have allowed men to go into women's bathrooms," Chapman said. "I think it affected the outcome of the voting because the opposition was misleading in their advertising."

According to the HOU equality website, the claim was false and had

been used by opponents of similar ordinances across the country.

In fact, Houston has a law that makes it illegal for people to enter bathrooms of the opposite sex in order to cause a disturbance, and it would have remained in effect if HERO had been passed.

HERO was not the first of its kind, and president of the Young Democrats Ajay Singh noted this in his explanation to the situation in the opposition's messages.

"Houston is one of the major cities in the U.S. that hasn't passed this type ordinance," Singh said. "In these cities, there has never been a single occurrence of this type of crime, where a guy has claimed to be trans-gender and then gone into a bathroom and committed sexual assault. [To my knowledge] it's never happened."

According to Media Matters (mediamatters.org), several officials in Texas cities that have passed similar ordinances, such as Dallas, Austin and El Paso, refuted the claim and stated that they have not heard of such incidences ever occurring. The article also

cited experts from 12 other states including Colorado, Connecticut and Hawaii. Each stated that they have not seen an increase in sexual assault and stress that the claim has no factual basis.

But opposition to HERO reached beyond the bathroom tiles and spooky '80's music. Some said that its effect would only exist in name; others, like Wei, supported certain proponents, but did not favor passage of the whole.

"I don't think that people will necessarily think that Houston is a bad city because it doesn't have this equal rights ordinance," Wei said. "People are going to come because of the petroleum industry and the jobs; there's only going to be a small percentage of people who are going to be turned off because of the lack of HERO."

Wei brought up the low expectation rate for municipal voting. Even if it had the regular 30 percent turnout, he argued, the ordinance would've been shut down.

"On the supporting side, we really didn't do well in combating the opposition's attack," Singh said. "It's because we left that untouched that they blew it so big out of proportion. Everyone saw it as this 'bathroom ordinance,' and the conservatives were able to gather a large presence of voters. I feel like if we had effectively responded to the advertisement campaign, then we could have stood a chance. I think that advertisement campaign is largely the reason we lost."

Junior Aidan Vazquez is a trans-gender student and, because his gender identity does not march with his biological sex, he would have been directly affected by the passing of HERO. While he agreed that the opposition's "bathroom campaign" had a large effect on the population, he believed that there was a different reason why people voted against the ordinance.

"I think that many people just don't understand what the LGBT+ community goes through," Vazquez said. "I don't think they know how

HERO would affect them. For example, if I got a job, I wouldn't be fired for being who I am."

Although HERO was voted down, supporters of the proposition continue to work to secure this kind of non-discrimination ordinance. Wei explained what he believed their next step should be.

"I think that the best thing to do right now is to split up HERO into many proponents so that the Republican Party can't run ads about one specific part, like the bathroom ordinance," Wei said. "I think that specific acts may get some proponents passed. However, in general, if the Republican Party can still turn out these ads like they did this cycle, then the ordinance will not be passed."

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"I think that many people just don't understand what the LGBT+ community goes through and how it affects them," Vazquez said. "I think we just need to educate people more about the LGBT+ community because if they don't know about it, then they won't agree to help us."

Chapman agreed with Vazquez's suggestion.

"I think more education is what the city of Houston needs," Chapman said. "I have no doubt that it will eventually become law. We might just have to wait five or ten years."

With the upcoming mayoral elections, the fate of HERO will rest in the next mayor's hands. The city cannot be sure of what will happen next with the ordinance until the next mayor is chosen. However, like Chapman, Singh has hope that the future of HERO is bright.

"Houston is the fourth largest city, and it's growing to be the third largest city," Singh said. "We are going to be representing America. I do believe Houston will eventually have HERO passed. Sometime, maybe in four years, eight years, however much time it's going to

## Features

ouston wants, but the H.E.R.O. it got



## Not the H.E.R.O. Houston wants, but the H.E.R.O. it got



**Bipartisan Buddies:** While High School Republicans of Texas Vice chairman Timothy Wei (left) and Texas High School Democrats of America chairman Ajay Singh (right) disagree on some political issues, they both share similar opinions on the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance.

CONNIE DENG  
Staff Writer

The advertisement began with a man entering a women's bathroom. In the background, a woman's voice narrated the big, blocky text that appeared on the screen as a scene played out for the audience. The black and white filter and anxious music created a horror movie ambiance, but the real terror began when a little girl walked into the bathroom. The following text on the black screen revealed the advertisement's final message: "Houston's Proposition 1: Vote No!"

Despite the advertisement's claims, the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO), dubbed the "Bathroom Ordinance," actually had very little to do with restrooms. The ordinance was created for the protection of 15 different groups of characteristics, including gender, race, sexual orientation and more, as they pertained to employment, public accommodations, housing, city services and city contracting practices. On Nov. 3, it was voted down with a resounding 62 percent

voting against the past ordinance.

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# Making a Point

## Fencing takes junior around the world

LAUREN SONIK  
Staff Writer

Junior Amy Jia loves to fight. She won't be the one starting trouble in the school hallways, nor would she appear on any infamous grainy cell phone videos, shrieking and pulling another girl's hair. She's far more likely to be found in a white full-length unitard, a mesh mask on her face and a deadly silver fencing sword in her hand.

"It seems really dangerous," Jia said. "But it's actually really safe."

Jia was introduced to the intense, fast-paced world of fencing when she was only a nine-year-old at a summer camp that was

too far away from her house. She eventually left the camp, but her new love of fencing went home with her. At 12 she started fencing regularly at a studio in West-U.

"It's right across from the Whole Foods [on Bellaire Blvd] and on top of a dance studio," Jia said. "But we stomp on the floors and they blast music, so the arrangement works."

After a while of non-competitive fencing, Jia began to wonder if her skills could be put to use in a real tournament.

"I fenced for like a year and a half starting in 7th grade, and I thought it was fun," Jia said. "Then I thought, 'maybe I should actually go and compete.'"

...continued on p. 5

photo courtesy of Amy Jia

**Struck through:** Junior Amy Jia shows the wall at Salle Mauro Fencing Academy what happens when it stands in front of a rapier-wielding boss.

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