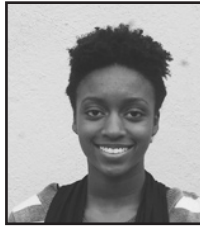


DOES “THE SYSTEM” INFRINGE TOO MUCH ON US?



Samantha Green
Reporter

YES

Emilie Cady
Reporter



MAYBE

Elizabeth Knarr
Reporter



NO

“Nothing we see in life is fake, it’s merely controlled.” –Samantha Green

Many people don’t want to wrap their heads around the system controlling our lives. This is often because of a deep set fear that we may not have control over the lives we live. Men and women move from place to place believing their decisions aren’t controlled by the “system.”

What is this system? The system may be defined as the government that controls the society. The government is made up of different legislative bodies that help make the country what it is. In a positive light the government “tries” to make sure that certain laws are implemented and keeps the country running (what’s left of it anyways—A better job than I could do nonetheless). The system is also made up of different subcategories, the most important one is the media.

Citizens hate feeling as if their rights are hindered by certain laws or as if they need to keep themselves in check at all times. Though laws are excellent tools used to keep law and order, it gets in the way of the endeavors one may have. Some also feel as if their rights are hindered because of censoring, oftentimes information in the outside world is inaccurate or untold. As a result of this some citizens are oblivious to current world events.

The media controls how information is received and transmitted; we then take that information and form opinions on them. Oftentimes our opinions may be faulty because of the information we receive about certain topics. People then become an army of puppets because of what they are told to believe. Even though some people are nonconformists the media filters information to us and we form opinions on certain things. This is another way the system controls our lives. By divulging pertinent information or altering important facts. For example many cable companies don’t have an independent channel for the BBC World News Network and if there is a broadcast it only lasts half an hour. If the CNN news channel speaks about other countries it tends to have a negative basis. The only time we hear about another country is if they are a threat or if something negative is happening to it. The sole purpose of even mentioning other countries is to either invoke fear or sympathy to raise money.

The system controls our lives because there isn’t much we can or will do. People like feeling controlled because there’s nothing more to feel. When there is a will there is a way and at the end of the day all these things are just greater things to look at. To some a way to filtrate paranoia, at the end of the day you should just think with your own mind. Make the right decisions, don’t always fall into the traps that are set; be a productive citizen (who follows the law) and think on your own.

Some people may think the ‘system’ is controlling their lives, others not at all; for me, I’m not so sure it’s one or the other. It’s hard for me to believe that the ‘system’ has complete control over everyone’s life, but I also know for a fact that we as a country are not really “free”.

I understand that they have control over us through things that they pay for with the people’s taxes, like public schools and hospitals. Everything we learn in school is what they want us to learn or what they think is necessary for us to know to be an “American citizen”. We also are required to follow all of the laws that they pass because if we don’t, they have the power to charge us with breaking the law and to throw us in jail, or to charge us a fine. It’s also very interesting to think about the fact that the ‘system’ probably controls what advertisements are allowed to go on television. For example, during elections, they allow different kinds of advertisements that both criticize runners and support them, but after elections, there can never be any commercials that are not in favor of the system because they want to strongly influence the way people think about them; they want people to think about them in a positive way without thinking about all of the scandals that tend to occur with people in positions of authority.

On the flip side, we do have control over our own lives – for the most part – at the local level. We have certain rights, such as the right to vote on laws, propositions, and the people we want to have power over our country, that allow for us to have some sort of control over the decisions that will be made at the Federal level concerning our own future. It’s nice to know that within our individual communities, we are pretty safe from the hands of control that belong to the system.

However, I also believe that although the ‘system’ sets the standard for what they want us to be like, when it comes down to it, everyone has a choice. We can choose to be slaves to the laws of our country or we can choose to revolt and stand up for what we believe in when we think that something isn’t right however, as a people under a united system we have to be cautious because we know that we can be persecuted for standing against them. My mom is always telling me that, “Every action has a reaction”, and it’s true. We have the choice to stand up for our beliefs and not allow complete control of our lives, but we also have to be careful because we can be persecuted at the Federal level.

I believe that although the ‘system’ has control of the larger aspects of our life, like the laws they must enforce and the schools and such that they pay for with our tax money, we also have some freedom. We are not completely controlled and forced to adhere to the rules of our country. In this way,

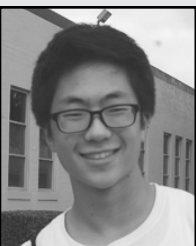
I believe that our country is a balance of systematic control and local freedom.

While “the system” does have the ability to interject its opinion at almost every turn, we must ask ourselves the question, “What was the system created for?” When we look back on our history, we find that the system was created for the express purpose of protecting our personal interests. It puts in place rules and regulations that keep our society ordered and functioning, in order to keep the peace. Without the system we have currently in place, our society would be in danger of corruption and possible collapse.

Not only is the system in place to protect the interests of the people, it is also controlled by the people. The democratic ideals of our founding fathers have held strong through the generations, and their ideology “Government of the people, by the people, for the people” still operates in our society today. Representatives are chosen through popular elections, and everyone eighteen years of age and over is welcome to vote. Therefore, you cannot criticize the system without also criticizing yourself and your fellow voters. If you feel that you and your fellow voters made a poor decision in your choice of representatives, you can vote them out of office in the next election. If a weak or corrupt representative is allowed to stay in power, it is not the fault of the system, but the fault of the people, for they are the system. If the voters do not take upon themselves the responsibility of choosing their representatives, they cannot criticize the way the system is run. Our entire system of government is dependent upon active participation by the people, and those who do not participate only detract from the efficiency and accuracy of the system.

Some may argue that even though the system is under the control of the people, it is dangerous, because a powerful individual could take it over and allow things to get out of hand. However, we have been granted the right to speak out against the system if we feel that it is not meeting our needs. We, the people, have the ability to overthrow any oppressive system through our right to peacefully assemble, as well as our right to free press, and above all, our right to free speech. If any powerful individual or group of individuals had taken over the government, or seem to have an unconstitutional amount of power, the dissatisfied people have the right to revoke their power. No single individual can take control, because the consent of the governed is still the greatest authority the system has. Without this consent, the system would cease to function.

So those of you who sit back and disparage the system “taking control” of your lives, remember that you have a say about the decisions made in our country. You have the right to speak out against injustices, protect your rights, and take matters of importance into your own hands. If you don’t like something, take affirmative action, take control, and change it!



Scott Choi (10)
“No, because technically we have the right to exercise our free will.”



Haley Harraka (9)
“Maybe, because it controls things on a national scale but you can still do law-abiding things.”



Daniel Diaz (12)
“Yes, because taxes are a huge burden on us.”



Mrs. Robinson (Staff)
“Yes, because the financial system is corrupt and some people in Wall Street are controlling things the way they are.”

IS RE-GIFTING A VALID PRESENT?



Sarah Rafiqi
Editor

YES

Every time we go shopping for presents, whether for our loved ones' birthdays, holidays, or other special occasions, we hope and work hard to buy a present that won't be re-gifted. Re-gifting, or taking gifts you once got from someone and secretly giving them as a gift to someone else, is something we have all been exposed to, whether we were the re-gifter or the one whose gift was being re-gifted. Although it is true that the thought of someone giving away a present you spent time and money to find especially for them seems insulting, and many people take it so, there are honestly several reasons why people shouldn't take the re-gifting personally.

The very first reason you shouldn't be bothered is that you gave that person a gift, and now it belongs to them to do with it what they please. When you give someone a present, by the very definition of the word, you have given over possession of that item for nothing in exchange. This means that you no longer have any rights to that item whatsoever. It doesn't matter if the gift receiver breaks, trashes, or re-gifts your present, they have every right to do so, and you have no right to interfere.

Secondly, gift-giving is all about just that – giving. Whenever we find an especially worthwhile present, we always seem to mentally picture the look on the face of the person that will be receiving it. That look of wonder and joy that we anticipate and then see is absolutely priceless, and can't be replaced. Therefore, in the spirit of the holiday season, and the charitable nature of gift-giving in general, why shouldn't you allow others to feel the joy of 'your' present. Even if the person you gave the gift to gave it to someone else, what is the worst that has happened? Another person has experienced the ecstasy of receiving your wonderful present, and your loved one has had the chance to experience the one-of-a-kind sensation of giving someone such joy. In effective, you've really made on more than one person happy, all for the price of one gift.

Thirdly, and very importantly, the fact that someone gave away your present, for whatever reason, does not, and cannot, cancel out the fact that you ever gave it to them in the first place. Underneath it all, it really is the thought that counts. The time, effort, and thought you initially put into your present still exists, even if that present no longer belongs to the person you intended it for. All that is needed to be known is that you did your job, and that you should feel good doing it.

Finally, if you really are that sensitive about have your presents re-gifted, don't buy presents worth re-gifting. Let's face it, the only presents we ever re-gift are the ones we don't want, and it is safe to assume that goes for everyone we know as well. Hence, if you really care about someone, you should know, or have put in the effort to find out, what kinds of things they would like as a gift. If even this is too much trouble for you, then hard, cold cash just might be the perfect present. Just be mindful you give out new money, not the re-gifted variety.



"No, it's not. It's about the love."
-Sepideh Ferdowsian (9).

No. Because it came from me first, and I gave it to you. Then you gave it away.
-Tiffani Aguirre (10)



"If I'm not going to use it and someone else is going to make better use of it, then yes."
-Anthony Haslam (11)

"I think it's ok because it saves money and it's creative."
-Keya Alexander (12)



If it's a terrible gift and you don't like it at all then ya.
-Ashwin Padalkar (12)

Yes, as long as the person you're giving the gift to doesn't know it's re-gifted.
-Kathy Pierce (11)



"It depends. If it was something new and it was still wrapped then it's ok. Really, it's not the gift, it's the kindness."
-Mrs. Guy, Faculty

"Heck ya! Sometimes somebody gives you something that's just not you."
-Mrs. Millam, Faculty



Reetu Inamdar
Editor

NO



The holiday season is arriving and gifts are being purchased for spiritual and non-spiritual occasions. However, along with celebrations of birthdays and anniversaries, products are quickly running out as Christmas, Hanukkah, and other holidays are approaching. As the holiday spirit continues to spread, people are purchasing gifts for loved ones, family, friends, workers, and so on. Still, many people are resorting to the idea of re-gifting. This term is regarded to people who receive gifts and then wrap them and hand it on to others. However, the Christmas idea of giving to others is completely lost in this process. There are a plethora of reasons to why gift wrapping is not an ideal situation to resort to. First and foremost, the idea of receiving a gift, no matter how shabby or cheap the gift is, is a thankful act and should be appreciated. This gift was made out of kindness and the simple of gesture of taking the time to get a gift should be noted. The fact that you give the gift to someone else is hurtful and shows the lack of appreciation for that person. Re-gifting also implies that you don't care about that person and didn't have time to go make or buy a gift for them. Therefore, no matter how much you like that person, don't re-gift since it shows that you don't care. Second, the holiday season especially is about giving. When a person re-gifts it not only shows a lack of holiday spirit, but it also is inconsiderate. The gracious act of giving gifts fills one with tremendous amount of joy and it also causes one to feel good about them self. The question to be noted is why do we give gifts? Gifts are supposed to be an act of selflessness, as you take the time out of your schedule to get something for your loved one. Re-gifting, not only undermines the initial thoughts of selflessness, but it also is quite tacky.

Third, re-gifting is just plain rude. When you re-gift to someone it shows that you don't care, you have no time, and shows that you are thoughtless, as well. The thought behind the gift matters, no matter how bad you think it is. The other person went out of their ways to get you one and therefore re-gifting is just rude. If the other person re-gifts a gift to you, don't re-gift another gift to them. Be the bigger person! You don't want to end up in the holiday of shame! How would you like it if you found out that the gift you gave to someone was re-gifted to someone else? You would be offended and would not view the same person after the incident. To avoid hard feelings, please refrain from re-gifting. It will cause the other person to also rethink next time.

Last, the act of re-gifting is truly just tacky. How would you like it if someone gave you an unwanted gift? Not only does it seem cheap, but can be obvious as well. There are many circumstances in which people forget to remove previous tags or personalized gifts. It is always easy to forget the presents that were given to you and it is even easier to mistakenly re-gift a gift to the same person. But, if you continue to feel by the end of this article that re-gifting is much easier, you will have to do a lot more work than necessary. You not only have to make sure there is no personalized note on the present itself, you also have to remember to not re-gift to the same person (for obvious reasons and if it isn't quite obvious, try it and see the outcome, but don't say I didn't warn you!). So instead of trying to remember all these rules, make it easier on yourself and DON'T re-gift!

ACHOO! "BLESS YOU, NOW BACK OFF, YOU'RE SICK!"

By: Shannon Hsu
Editor

For most of us, this time of the year can be quite troublesome. "Flu season", as the period of time spanning from October to as late as May has been dubbed, has officially gone into full swing.

Usually, parents will begin to become paranoid for their children's health. The memory of last year's outbreak of swine flu is probably still fresh in the memories of many. There's most likely no need to become extreme germophobes this season, but it's still a good idea to take precautions to ensure that we don't become ill ourselves. But I sometimes wonder if taking caution to avoid minor sicknesses during

flu season redirects our attention from other icky things we could spread to one another— say head lice or bed bugs, for example. And you can get them any time of the year, there's no particular "season".

Concepts are usually more understandable if you provide a hypothetical situation as an example – although this should be fairly simple to understand. Suppose you find a really nice, expensive hat one day. And not necessarily some random hat you picked up off the floor, perhaps it was on sale in a store. Do you ever think twice before you put it on your head, or where that hat has been and who's tried it on before? In most cases, the answer would be no. That's a shame, because guess what? You have head lice now. Well, perhaps that was a bit of an exaggeration. Not every hat out there will

contain the lice from someone who wore it before you did. But why is it that we worry about catching something like a cold that will go away shortly, but we tend to forget about other things like head lice or bed bugs, which don't simply "go away"?

Knowledge is power – as clichéd as the expression is. Instead of just focusing on the flu, colds, or other illnesses related to this time of the year, we should be fully aware of all the health hazards out there, as well as how to prevent, and counter them, if prevention fails. Of course, "other" health hazards aren't limited to the head lice or bed bugs previously mentioned. It's just baffling to me that we tend to be so concerned about these easily treated problems when there are so many other things out there to worry about that don't even come to mind. We're panicking over and com-

plaining about common colds while people elsewhere are dying of other even more serious and scarier illnesses, such as cholera.

This doesn't mean that taking extra care not to become ill this flu season isn't still extremely important – because it certainly is. But at the same time, don't forget about other scenarios that could leave you much worse off.

Schools, grocery stores, other public places, and even the comfort of your own homes are all cesspools of germs and illnesses just waiting to be spread - not just colds or the flu. So prepare yourself for the worst, because I'm sure there are things out there that are much more troublesome.

DO YOU HAVE THAT ONE FRIEND WHO CARRIES SANITIZER EVERYWHERE AND SMOTHERS IT ALL OVER THEMSELVES? CARTOON BY: CHRISTINA CHAVEZ.



EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA?

By: Reetu Inamdar
Editor

Reports have shown that most students in high school are not ready for college even with the extensive pass rates from the High School exit exam. Although teachers try to prepare students for standardized tests, they lack to prepare these students for college. As the teachers follow the standard regulations they lack the necessities to prepare students for the tough college curriculum. California, known for their rigorous testing material, also faces the same problem as many college students undergo a struggle to survive.

About thirty five percent of college students drop out of college the first year. Although there are many other

outside issues that can result too many students dropping out, some students drop out because of their lack of preparation and readiness for college. The teacher's curriculum is based around passing the standardized testing, but these tests don't accurately represent the students as they face challenges in high school.

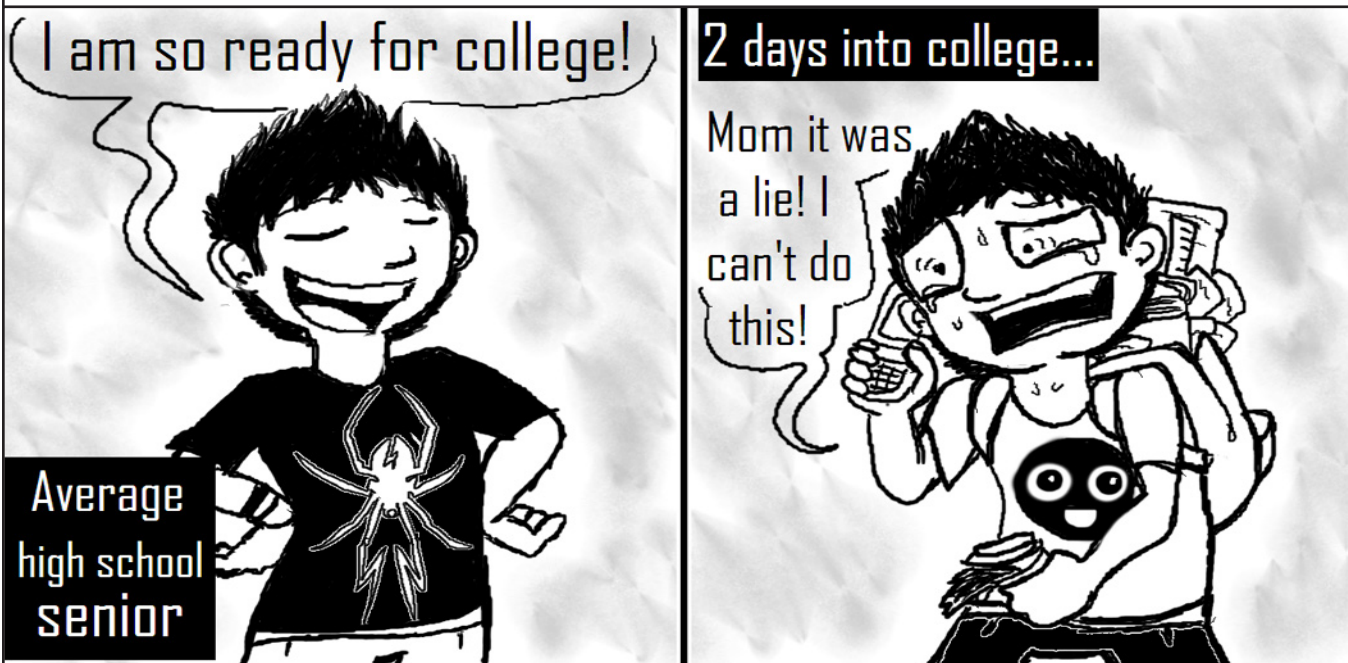
Around ninety two percent of the teachers admit that the students are not well prepared for college and the curriculum ties them from truly them preparing them for college. "We live in an information age, yet our nation's teachers are lacking the information they need to succeed as educators," Barry Salzbarg, chief executive officer of Deloitte LLP said in response to the college pass rates.

Many of these college bound students lack some of the skills to truly succeed in college and there-

fore result to dropping out, failing, or repeating classes. This struggle can easily be avoided if the curriculum of the school is more surrounded around preparing students for college. The school boards should now begin molding their system of education around preparing students for college instead of passing the standardize tests that occur at the end of the year. These students now face a greater percentage of struggling in college.

The increasing struggle to pass college is tracing back to the effective study habits taught in high school. The bigger question leads to are all students ill prepared due to the lack of guidance in high school. As many standardized tests show the accelerating progress of each children, does it show how prepared they ultimately are for college?

DOES HIGH-SCHOOL REALLY PREPARE US OR IS IT JUST AN "AMERICAN DREAM" FOR EQUALITY IN EDUCATION? CARTOON BY CHRISTINA CHAVEZ.



SILENCE IS GOLDEN... OR SO THEY TOLD ME

BEN CERCEA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I regret to inform you that this is the last time you will ever see this rant (unless of course you check the school website or you save this issue) this year.... now that I have your attention, let us begin.

We will now go to Jena, Germany where we will meet a retired man who bricked himself in his cellar. After a few days of contemplating his escape route, he decided to break down his neighbor's wall instead of the one he made... I guess his work was too good to be demolished.

Staten Island, New York will be our next stop in our marvelous adventure. A man and his accomplice robbed the owners of Brothers Pizzeria and took away all their dough. Though maybe mistaken for a pun, the truth is, they actually stole dough for making pizza. The man, let us name him Brady, was released on \$1 million bail.... wait how did he get bail money if he had to steal dough from a pizzeria? Who bailed him out.. the dough man?

At a Motel 6 in Spartanburg County, South Carolina an elderly man was told to smash various things including a tv and to demolish a wall in order to free a "midget" who was said to be in the room. The man who told him all these things was an apparent prank caller who told the elderly man that there were cameras in the room and he had to save the dwarf so the cops can help him out of the room. Cops arrived later in the evening because of a complaint. They came when the prank caller called again so they took over the phone. The man on the phone hung up and said it was the wrong number. Apparently this isn't the first time this has happened.... well, all out of space, bye.

HOW SOON IS TOO SOON TO PLAY CHRISTMAS MUSIC?

By: Reetu Inamdar
Editor

"Tis' the season to be jolly fa la la la..." Ah, the bells are jingling and the time is finally here. Student's favorite holiday, Christmas is just around the corner and stores have already begun to stock the Christmas special. However is Christmas spirit coming along way to early? Thanksgiving stores began ringing the holiday jingle, radios began playing carols, and Christmas lights began to be setting up. The stores have already began their Christmas carols, however, is the Christmas spirit coming along way to early. Is the happy Christmas special taking over the Thanksgiving holiday?

The early Christmas spirit truly crowds the Thanksgiving holiday.

Why not start putting turkey posters right after Halloween? How come valentine joy is swept in after New Years? The Christmas lights and decorations are set around the Thanksgiving holidays, possibly overwhelming others of the holiday joys. Stores like, Wal-Mart, Target, Macy's, and Nordstrom Rack began sending coupons and other delightful specials.

Although many say customers's like to buy their Christmas presents early, so the stores put out their products earlier. This not only puts pressures on stores to put their products out early but also causes the seasonal rush of many customers. Christmas is coming too soon because people begin putting decorations up too early. With the lights and trees and decorations coming out so early, Christmas, which should be a one day holiday is becoming a whole month holiday. Since Christmas is given so much im-

portance, holidays such as Black Friday that was formerly connected with Thanksgiving becomes a day where people can buy early Christmas lights for cheap prices. If stores continue to market the Christmas products, people will only be further drawn in and

shall buy these consumer goods. However along with buying those goods, the spirit of Christmas starts earlier. With such an extended time frame, Christmas starts to become the most important holiday in modern society.

PHOTO COURTESY FROM WWW.EXTRAORDINARYFILMPROJECT.COM



DISCIPLINE THE "YOUNG TURK" INSIDE US

By: Allen Lin
Reporter

Discipline separates the rule followers from the rule breakers. It imposes conformity and punishes those who fail to fall in. This imposition of will is power, a certain kind of power called disciplinary power by Foucault. Discipline and the setting of rules allow for institutions to decide what is favorable and what is unfavorable and mold individuals into this definitions, and to weed out those who resist.

Those that resist are redesignated, and whether this new name is convict, delinquent, problem student, the end result is the same. It creates a class of rule breakers and gives them a label so that they can be controlled, while simultaneously keeping the rest of the population content and peaceful.

Now that a baseline level of knowledge has been laid down, the question can be posed and considered. Does Foucault's Theory of Disciplinary Power apply to public schooling?

There are certainly rules present in school. Be on time. Be prepared. Do your work. Take your test. There can also, at least somewhat, a class of problem students. These students are often disciplined. They often get in trouble.

However, does this result in normalization and control, as the theory claims? Certain sets of students tend to seek out certain classes. There is a scramble to make one's resume as impressive and fitting to college standards as possible. Although some would that there is no reason for homogenization to be forced upon the student population, it does not necessarily need to be caused by malicious intent and could simply be the result of a previous generation imposing the rules they were taught.

And yet teenagers are often considered a rebellious group. They rebel against authority and question the ways of their elders. Furthermore, there is a remarkable diversity in the sorts of activities students undergo outside of class, whether it be extracurricular, hobby, or what have you. Delinquent students seem not to be controlled and made docile, as they are babysat. Deviations in behavior and personality seem not be discouraged, but encouraged. A common slogan is to "be yourself". Although peer pressure is present in school, if one dislikes the rule settings of one group, one can simply find new friends.

There is homogeneity in public schooling, but there is also a large degree of differentiation between students. Some parts of the theory do fit, however, I doubt its applicability as a whole.

LET'S NOT GET WRAPPED UP IN WHAT'S NOT HOLIDAY CHEER. MAKE MEMORIES YOU'LL NEVER FORGET

By: Samantha Green
Reporter

"In Ukraine it's not about gifts it's about the family, we'd sit around the table and eat and laugh. We'd sit for hours talking about different things and just enjoy each other's company; it was never about what we would buy or what we could get."-Larysa Maswadeh

Holidays all over the world have their pros and cons however the meanings behind these holidays have changed. It is now a time devoted to mass production and consumerism rather than quality time with our friends and family.

With a direct shift in our society's priorities foreigners feel as if something is missing and have a difficult time adapting to the holidays. In a society so ethnically diverse many of us may lose sight of our practices this is where we need to focus on the family rather than shopping.

As time passes by the word family loses its meaning; it has lost the characteristics that once made it what it was. A family is unit held together by a single trait, families may be something as simple as a basketball team or a bloodline. Either way the focus of the holidays should be on the family and the traditions you may practice. These traditions maybe cutting a Christmas tree, lighting candles or even just sitting in front of the television watching the news together; all of these things are invaluable to your experience as an individual. Many people feel obligated to go shopping for extravagant gifts; it's not about keeping up with the Jones'— it's about making memories that you'll never forget.

"I feel as if the media has consumerised holidays and made it less family oriented," says Sejal Patel (12). Seeing that the media has a large influence on our lives one needs to find a healthy

balance and not get lost in the commercialism that we find during times like these. Commercials make sure to highlight the need of these products for example, "Don't you need an animatronic dog that can deliver the paper and dispense water into a cup for your consumption!" Please note that this product doesn't exist, I don't have a patent on it either so you can steal my idea—this is the very point being made, people are just trying to make money. Learn to separate yourself from secular distractions; life doesn't last forever but we need to make something of it. Business places are open twenty-four hours a day to sell things to you that you don't need, keep in mind that while you're losing money they are making it.

Larysa Maswadeh spoke about being at the



PHOTO COURTESY FROM MCLEOD.SIUC.EDU

table with her family for hours; when was the last time we all did that? Her mention of gifts was null in void, her tone of voice was melancholy but at the same time there was an air of happiness. Larysa Maswadeh is my mom and moving here has been difficult for us because it's

hard maintaining our practices. My mother grew up in Ukraine, I grew up in Jamaica, even though the people were different in both places there was a common trait unity. Many of us aren't from this country and it's hard practicing our traditions, instead of spending time at the mall spend it with your family and friends and make new traditions.

Even though we all contribute to the economy don't allow the superficiality of that new ipod, ipad or cell phone to get in the way of a real human connection. Visit your grandparents, eat at the dinner table, have something to remember when everyone is no longer there. Most of all keep safe and be happy with what you do or don't get, the most precious gift is not that ipod but the life you've been given. Have a wonderful holiday and make a resolution you can actually keep next year!