

# When Cultures Commingle

There are thousands of different cultures in the world. When those cultures come together under one roof, the different rules and customs mix to make a unique blend that makes the family's routine completely their own.

It's difficult already to learn to deal with both sides of a person's family and in turn learn to act accordingly. However, when those sides represent two cultures, there could be a need to change a person's etiquette. Sophomore Kaylee Chataway, a Mexican-American, has firsthand experience with this cross-culture struggle.

"For different holidays, our tradition is to do [what] my dad's side of the family [does]," Chataway said. "[There are] different traditions and different routines that they do. You cook no matter what holiday it is, such as your birthday. Whereas on my mom's side, it's nothing really outrageous."

Chataway and other people like her have learned to deal with varying family celebrations. Festivities can be unique to specific cultures, and not all cultures observe the same holidays. Nepal has festivals unique to Nepal, as sophomore Asana Pokhrel has experienced. While these traditions may be unfamiliar to some, they are sacred to the culture of others.

"[In Nepal], we have this festival every Sunday, and it's called Teej," said Pokhrel, who visited India during the summer. "It's basically where all the women and the girls are singing and dancing. The people who are already married praise their husbands [in order to have] a longer life and marriage."

Students with a multicultural background know how important it is to be culturally connected to both the place they live and the place from which they came. Those striving to find balance between cultures often visit the places they are from in order to further educate themselves.

“My entire family lives in Nepal,” Pokhrel said. “I went there this summer for 45 days. It made me appreciate my life more.”

There are problems that arise for those with multicultural connections, especially when experiencing bias towards a culture.

“People from one culture think that they’re better, or that their culture is more superior than mine,” Pokhrel said. “That happens a lot, it happens to my parents quite a bit. It’s never specifically happened to me though.”

Another problem is stereotyping those of a specific culture.

“[People] assume that I know how to clean right because apparently Mexicans know how to clean,” Chataway said. “They’ll assume that I know how to take care of cattle. They’ll assume when I get older I’ll work on roofs and do landscaping.”

Pokhrel said a person’s culture or skin color shouldn’t determine their worth.

“I wish people knew that just because I’m another culture, that doesn’t mean [anyone of a different skin color is] better than me, [and it] doesn’t mean I’m better,” Pokhrel said. “I think [a person’s actions are] what’s most important instead of looking at culture. Everyone is basically the same.”

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## **Redefining OK**

The Coca Cola Company looms large as one of the world’s most successful businesses, recognizable by its ruby colored cans and cursive fonts alone. However, even the beverage industry’s apex predator must search for a new schtick on occasion.

Many corporations today grow complacent as their popularity increases. However, in [1993](#), the Coca Cola Company refused to take the predictable path to catch the attention of Generation [X](#). Teens and young adults of the era were bored with the overly optimistic ads of the 80s.

The Coca Cola Company mirrored this attitude with OK Soda, a carbonated beverage that proudly marketed itself as “unremarkable.” During their attempt at this new branding, they ignored the cheerful claims from their prior advertisements. The company decided the [slogan](#) “Have a Coke and a smile,” was a cliché. Now, the phrases in its commercials, “Things are going to be OK” and “OKness,” were all the rage, or at least that was Coke’s intention.

Despite extensive advertising in the form of odd [artwork](#) and [commercials](#), Coca Cola pulled the plug on the product after unsatisfactory results in test markets, just two years following its conception, according to BuzzFeed. This marketing scheme is now considered a failure compared to the company’s history of success.

However, the real problem with the product may have been time. With each generation comes new opinions, and Gen Z, the generation of current high schoolers, is no different.

“It’s a cool phrase, “OKness.” It made me want to try it,” sophomore Angie Parrott said. “The way [Coca Cola is] putting it makes it sound better than just the word okay.”

OK Soda takes a refreshing spin on the concept of being average, even bragging that a sip from their substance brings the drinker to a “very OK” state of being, which the product endorses in its commercials.

The word “OK” also sets low expectations for consumers. If a product undersells itself, buyers are unlikely to be disappointed in it.

“It’s very average and everyone likes that in Gen Z,” junior Blaine Johnson said. “They know it’s not going to be great.”

Despite these seemingly clever marketing tactics, some students were not impressed with the product, remarking that it is too concerned with their uniqueness as shown in the random structure of its commercials.

“[The idea would have worked better] if they would have went about it a different way,” sophomore Alex Hines said. “[Like if] they tried to approach things differently and use better visuals other than just random soda cans appearing out of thin air.”

Hines also critiques it artistically, commenting on its can designs, ranging from hyper realistic [greyscale](#) drawings to [red](#) disproportionate faces. She saw the latter as a poorly executed imitation of one of history’s most renowned artists.

“Picasso’s art style was very not set in a form. The eyes would be like one’s up on the forehead and the other’s down. Everything’s scattered about,” Hines said. “[The cans are] trying to be Picasso, but they can’t because it’s not.”

Although Hine’s critical perspective reflects the opinion of its original test subjects, others before her responded more positively to the product than those of the 20th century, indicating a change in society’s morale.

Freshman Cortez Gracy blames this on a rocky political atmosphere seeping into the attitudes of teenagers.

“We have immigration going on.” Gracy said, “People are shooting up areas due to the fact that they don’t feel like they’re treated right.”

Parrott, however, attributes society’s negative nature to the rise of social media platforms such as Twitter and its cynicism.

“It’s become a society rule to see the worst in some things and say whatever you want about it,” Parrott said. “You don’t always have to look at the bright side.”

OK Soda’s defiant rejection of this bright side, regardless of its prosperity as a long term marketing technique, is undeniably attention-grabbing. Their reverse psychology approach leaves people with questions only answered upon purchase of this aggressively average beverage.

While it’s not the most economically effective technique for running a business, OK Soda serves as a reminder to take risks. Never encumber yourself in the boundaries society sets as positive and negative. Explore the gray areas of emotions rarely acknowledged instead of the extremes, because one failure in corporate America’s olden days may resonate with new generations to come. If nothing else, OK Soda reminds us of one of life’s most basic principles.

“Sometimes, it’s OK to be OK,” Parrott said.

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## **May the best cheater win**

My swim practice ran late. I barely made it to theatre rehearsal on time, and when I got home in the late hours of the night, there was a pile of homework sitting on my desk to ensure that I will not be getting any sleep. It didn’t even cross my mind to study for the test that I forgot was happening. Sleep deprivation and confusion takes over as I stare at the foreign ideas that cover my test booklet. I glance over at the student next to me. She answers the questions efficiently. Soon enough, I feel my hand quickly writing down her answers as my eyes switch between her paper and my own answer document. With my classmate’s answers

written down as my own, I turn in my test with false confidence and voices in my head enhancing the raging guilt I feel.

Cheating is a plague that has taken schools by storm for generations as students' crowded schedules and social lives take priority over school work. While some students may argue that cheating is merely a lifeboat to save them in case of an emergency, for others, cheating is merely a habit, something they do to prevent them from enduring hours of mind-numbing homework or having to fight the relentless battle of maintaining a decent grade point average.

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– Kate Morgan

While to some who cheat this may not seem like a prominent issue, however, cheating not only robs students of their own education and other skills that they might need in the future. Cheating can also belittle or discredit other students who struggle and work hard to maintain their grades.

Because of the class rank system in place, we are constantly competing against each other to be in the top places or top percentage. Some students constantly work hard and give all of their effort towards doing the best they can in school. When other students dismiss this work through cheating and cheat their way to the top of their class, other students are negatively impacted. Some students are having to fight harder to keep their rank as other students slither their way up to the top by stealing answers from other students, each other, and the internet.

Not only does cheating impact other students, but cheating is

also robbing the student of the free education that we have access to. By mindlessly copying down answers to a test, quiz or homework, students are losing the opportunity to learn and comprehend the material. Instead of using homework to learn, they use it as a free 100 for a daily grade. Instead of using tests as an assessment of their knowledge, they use it as a chance to see how sneakily they can peek at their phone or the test next to them.

Students who use cheating as a way of life don't always experience certain dilemmas that other students are able to experience and learn from. As other students learn skills, such as time management and different methods to use for studying, people who cheat their way through miss out on the many life lessons that struggling in high school has to offer.

Cheating takes the high school experience for granted. There is so much to learn and discover if you are to push through the hardships and endless work you must endure to come out successful.

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## **Everything is bigger in Texas**

The Texas High Multicultural Club on May 11-13 traveled to Austin, TX, to tour the city. Club sponsor Alejandra Hernandez decided to take this trip for the benefit of the members and to expand their cultural roots.

"When I tell people I went to Mexico they imagine resorts, beaches, and tour destinations not knowing that I was in a little town and experiencing a different house everyday. I also remember going to Houston and other cities but never actually getting to experience the city," said Hernandez. "I

know that most of the kids in my club have experienced the same thing. I want them to go to a city and be a tourist, explore the city, and just to walk the streets and enjoy it, to do things that they would have never imagined doing on their own.”

Austin is known for its eclectic live-music scene centered around country, blues, rock, and other genres. There are many Mexic-Arte Museums in Austin and its purpose is to enrich and educate the community through art.

“The first thing that we did was visit the Mexic-Arte Museum,” said Hernandez. “It was really beautiful to visit the museum, just to see the traditional and contemporary Latin art and culture was absolutely breathtaking and memorable. We then visited the Baile Folklórico Champion Team from Austin High School and learned one of their dances. You could really feel the good energy in every place we went.”

For many of these club members, traveling is not a common thing. The Multicultural Club worked hard to raise the money for this trip by selling ‘aguas frescas’ and traditional snacks for it to become a reality.

“I want my kids to know that hard work does pay off and that it is okay to do things that they have never done before,” said Hernandez. “I want them to want to develop a sense of adventure and have a desire to explore the unknown, and not just for cities but in life in general. I want them to know that there is a whole world out there and that they should be a part of it, they should experience it.”

The Multicultural Club has immensely expanded because of the support that they have gained from the student body. The club is made for students to feel proud of their cultures and to immerse themselves in the community.

“I just want to thank the teachers, administrators and all the students that have helped us raise the money to take this

trip,” said Hernandez. “My kids work very hard and take so much pride in making the products for our fundraisers. The ‘Aguas Frescas’ fundraiser is the most popular one. It has expanded over the last three years. A huge thank you to everyone that buy our products. Without them, we cannot take a trip like the one we took to Austin.”

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## **‘Coco’ gets it right**

The Day of the Dead is meant to be a time for families to come together and honor their deceased ancestors while vibrant Latin music blends with the brilliant colors and dazzling designs. Directors Lee Unkrich and Adrian Molina do a fantastic job in doing so in directing Pixar’s newest movie. “Coco” is a story of family and culture, of death and purity that will resonate with a wide range of audiences.

“Coco” follows the life of Miguel Rivera (Anthony Gonzalez), a 12-year-old Mexican boy from the small village of Santa Cecilia, Castile and León, who wants to follow his dream of pursuing music, despite his family not allowing him to do so. “Coco” is themed around the annual Mexican holiday, Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead).

The movie begins with Miguel’s great-great-grandmother, Imelda (Alanna Ubach), founding the family shoe business to support her daughter, Coco, after her husband abandoned them to pursue a music career. After that incident, the Riveras choose not to tolerate musicians or music itself.

The movie soon jumps to present-day, where all the Rivera family members are involved in the shoe business, including Miguel as a shoe shiner, but his dream is to follow the footsteps of Ernesto de la Cruz (Benjamin Bratt), a famous

musician that passed away. Miguel secretly plays the guitar in his attic, watches movies of de la Cruz and plays his songs.

One day, Miguel sees a flyer about a talent show that the town will be hosting and it catches his interest. Through a series of strange circumstances, Miguel finds himself crossing over to the Land of the Dead, where he is pursued relentlessly by his deceased relatives who want to send him back.

Followed by his adorable street pup, Dante, over a bridge made of *cempasúchil* (Marigold), Miguel then finds himself in a glowing, multi-layered city where ghosts who look exactly like Dia de los Muertos skeletons are everywhere; their bony faces are vivid and emotionally expressionless.

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‘Coco’ is themed around the annual Mexican holiday, Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)”

– Alvarado

There are a couple of present-day references in the film as well. For instance, the dead line up at Disneyland-like gates to get in and out of the Land of the Dead and the dead can return to the land of the living to see their loved ones only if their loved ones have remembered to put out their photographs in their *ofrendas*, Dia de los Muertos shrines filled with food and other offerings. A down-on-his-luck ghost, Hector (Gael Garcia Bernal), offers to help Miguel find de la Cruz so he can go back home if only Miguel will put his photograph in his *ofrenda*.

Miguel and Hector go on an adventure that includes a wonderful musical show with Gonzalez singing his heart out as Miguel. This movie will take you in directions you never expected. It contains betrayal, shocking revelations and tearful romantic reunions.

The climax is by far my favorite moment in the movie, and it's also emotional. There's nothing more moving than a child getting in touch with the ancestors he's lost and creating a bond that can last for a lifetime. However, Hector's backstory gives a glimpse of his past life with his daughter and his music to Miguel.

With "Coco" being Pixar's latest animated movie, the company really expanded its wings and pushed into new territory, including betrayal and murder, without neglecting its family franchise responsibilities.

The Latino audience is getting bigger and bigger, and Disney acknowledges that. "Coco" comes across as a celebration of the ways culture can unite us across borders, even when those borders are between the dead and the living. "Coco" will definitely play on our heartstrings as much as the plot itself.

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## **Music around the world**

Despite the fact that music has been a great contributor to cultures around the globe, namely American music's influence as chart-topping songs in multiple countries, the themes in music from different nations are universally appealing to every audience. While music from the states garner worldwide popularity, there is a wealth of music to implement into an everyday playlist.

"In Brazil where I come from, we listen to our own music such as Portuguese funk, sertanejo, samba, forro which are genres we enjoy," junior Ana Gonçalves said. "We also listen to pop music. I love the singer called Marília Mendonça because her music is so beautiful and very popular in my country."

## “Alô Porteiro” by Marília Mendonça

Although music from the exchange students' home countries are prominent, American influenced genres are also appreciated. Junior Nino Khvitia, from the country Georgia, listens to rock & roll and classical music. She finds the balance between both countries' genres yet shares a love for classical artists.

“I listen to a lot of American music, but I also enjoy Georgian rock and roll,” Khvitia said. “My favorites are classical and rock such as Pink Floyd, Guns n Roses, Nirvana, Marilyn Manson and Irakli Charkviani. I also love to listen to classical music such as Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, Chopin, Vivaldi, Bach and Shostakovich.”

## “Suls” by Irakli Charkviani

Junior Julia Kubiah mainly gravitates toward the rap atmosphere of music from her mother country, Poland. Citizens of Poland are culturally involved and music is an aspect in which a sense of community is shared.

“If you want to listen to rap, I can recommend Quebonafide, Zeus and Lasio Kompanija as a few Polish rap artists,” Kubiah said.

## “HEY”- Muka

Khvitia sees the disconnect with America and other foreign countries because of a lack of branching out and willingness to immerse in a different culture. Khvitia believes that listening to music from another culture is part of a positive learning process in accepting others.

“I think people should be interested to find out how my language sounds in songs,” Khvitia said. “It's always good to learn something new and listen to other music from different

countries.”

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## **Living like a local**

As I stepped off the plane and into Kahului Airport, the sweet scent of Hawaiian pineapple filled the air around me. Swathes of fellow tourists rushed past me in desperate attempts to reach baggage claim before everyone else. Mild airport anxiety had set in, but once in the car was en route to the apartment, relaxing came easy. This was vacation, but it didn't feel like it. Instead, I was to make Hawaii my home for the next two weeks.

Hawaiian life is much like you'd expect: palm trees, pineapples and bungalows made of a variety of local materials. Looking around, you really start to question whether or not you're still in the same country. Sure, you have your Starbucks and McDonald's, but with the wide variety of local foods priced roughly the same as a Quarter Pounder, seared mahi becomes the favorable choice.

In fact, with such an expansive variety of foods, it becomes a bit overwhelming. One of the island's many renowned establishments, Maui Brewing Company, is famous for their draft beers and fine foods. Their wide open seating and mellowed out, sports-centered atmosphere made for an eating experience that was unique and individual— even for a brewery.

Each Mauian town has its own cultural personality. Paia is a hippy town: organic food markets and restaurants line the streets like liquor stores to State Line, an award-winning fish market lies at its heart and local Hawaiian art of all forms is displayed in windows.

Lahaina is surfer's paradise: brand names and board shops such as Vans and Billabong clutter Main Street, which sits only a few feet from the beach.

Hana embodies the Hawaiian native: secluded, simple and largely unpretentious. Each town has its own flair to bring to the island culture.

Formality is all but absent in the chilled-out surfer dialect, but in a way that makes chatting with the locals a casual affair. The east end of the island hosted a more native crowd, of whom spoke in an almost incoherent slang, and their unwelcoming scowls signaled an overall distaste for tourists.

In more secluded areas, such as the coastal town of Hana, locals attempt to scare off tourists from admittedly more dangerous areas by placing skulls and bones of various animals along the highways, but for good reason. These areas are best left to the people who know them through and through.

The Hawaiian people themselves are some of the most relaxed you'll ever meet. Secular issues such as politics seemed absent from mind in Maui. The liberal mindset doesn't allow for any interfering on the well-being of others. Instead, focus is placed more on the spiritual and physical well-being of the self, which makes for a crowd so down to earth you stop and question your own motives in life. The way of life doesn't allow judgement; You view people as just another situation, someone with a history and a story to tell.

Health bars and yoga centers don't cover the island for the same reasons they might elsewhere. They exist because the culture drives a demand for places centered around self-betterment with meaningful experiences. The people you meet day-to-day are memorable because their intent isn't profit. They view you not as a customer, but as another human being. And while that may seem like an "across the board" mindset, you'll find yourself craving the profoundness of the

relationships you form with ordinary people when it's all said and done.

Some of Hawaii's most incredible landscapes are easily some of the most dangerous. Most of the topography sits well above sea level, so outlooks and vistas, with their makeshift advisory signs and burial grounds, warn of danger. The Road to Hana featured roads most wouldn't even think of driving; Any vehicle larger than a pickup truck was asking for trouble. Furthermore, blowholes, vacuum-like holes in the rocky earth where the ocean breeze shoots water well above the surface, have been known to suck people in, leading to an abrupt and frightening death.

High above the clouds, the terrain is rocky and jagged, especially on Mount Haleakala, Hawaii's only active volcano. Its peak sits at a cool 10,023 feet and the view is unlike any other, but so is the danger. Some drops would give you enough time to really come to terms with the fact that you'll have a very sticky end. But of course, if you're smart enough to stay humble, you'll leave with pictures that seem too amazing to be real.

Hawaii has offered an experience that not many can say they've had. It's truly a masterpiece of mother nature, and its distinct culture and history make it a place unlike any other on Earth. The privilege of having the opportunity to truly live like a local is one that allowed me to experience Hawaii and what it has to offer without the filter of luxuries and accommodations of a resort and the typical vacation setting. It's easy to see why the spirit of Aloha is so heavily embodied in Hawaiian culture. It's not just a friendly "hello" or "goodbye," it's the welcoming embrace of a culture open to all others.