

THUMBS

The Kirkwood Call gives its thumbs up and thumbs down to some of the latest controversies.

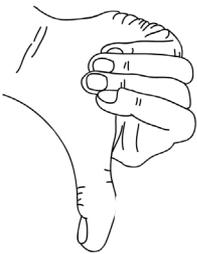
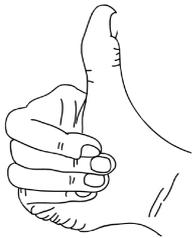
Chacos

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“Rude” by MAGIC!

Racism: the subtle things

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opinions writer



In high school one of my mom’s close friends, John*, was black. One day when she pulled into

John’s driveway, she found herself being harassed by a police officer. He questioned her on why she was at a black family’s home, how she was “associated” with them and what was in her bag. The officer then proceeded to search her car without any probable cause.

This incident happened in the mid-1980s, but the truth is that although we as a society, have made great strides in overcoming racism, the same issue continues to happen. Legalized segregation and discrimination has diminished, Jim Crow laws have been abolished and America has a black president. But because of how far we have come, we sometimes forget our past.

As lovely as it may be to ignore our past mistakes, it is what leads to the reoccurrence of the same problems. Just in the past month, this was grimly illustrated with the murder of 18-year-old Mike Brown, an unarmed teen who was shot by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. The scariest part about the shooting is that Brown is reflected in some students at KHS. He was just a kid who made a bad choice and figured that the worst possible thing that could amount from stealing some cigars was a slap on the wrist. Instead, it cost him his life.

Everyone’s next thought turned to whether the cop that killed Brown was racist. Did he kill Brown because he was black, or was it because he was a little too trigger-happy? Was he threatened or did he just panic?

The word “racist” should be an incredibly offensive word. One that should be cringeworthy. One you never would imagine in your wildest dreams would be thrown around as carelessly as any other noun. But

it’s become one that has been tossed around so lightly that most people, teenagers especially, have become desensitized to. At KHS, the phrase, “You’re racist,” is usually accompanied by a fit of laughter. We know what racism is, we know what a racist is, but most white students have never experienced racism.

But for many black students, racism is the stereotype people have of them before they walk in the room or people talking quieter when they get close. There’s racial division that occurs subconsciously everyday, from the classes we take to where we sit at lunch.

We have come a long way from our past, but we still have a ways to go. Where our generation takes this will set the stage for the next generation. Being able to joke about something like racism might mean we’ve surpassed our past. But it also might mean that it’s time for us to take a step back so we can take a step forward: to become more aware.

Racism is still here. It thrives in its subtleties. I’m not saying everyone is racist, but if we take a moment to look and become conscious of it, we will have taken the first step. The next is to be heedful of the weight of the words we say. The terms we throw around lightly can feel like knives to others.

In an evolving world, change doesn’t happen on its own, people are the ones who make it happen. Whether or not we choose to do anything is completely up to us. We’re lucky enough to be at KHS where we are given room to grow. My question is: why aren’t we doing it?

**Name has been changed*

art by **Emma Teson**

