

Editors Column

Voices of the Future: The Power of Teen Activists



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Being involved in public discourse is a great way to make your voice and opinions heard! [Source: Author, Rachel Chung]

Teenagers have always been at the forefront of cultural change, but in the present day, their voices are becoming increasingly important in the worlds of media and activism. In an age that is characterized by social media, global connection, and unfettered access to information, contrary to pop-

ular belief, teens are not solely consuming media; they are also creating it. Through this creation, teens are challenging societal norms and even their platforms to demand justice in various social fights. Their perspectives are of immense importance to public discourse and are helping to push

movements forward, from climate action to racial justice.

One of the most important aspects of teen participation with the media is their authenticity. A teenager's innate nature to speak with honesty and raw emotional power, combined with platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube that allow for free speech, allows teens to fully express their opinions. However, others may argue that this complete freedom of expression can be a negative influence or that this can lead to more public disagreements. While I agree with this sentiment, I also believe that sometimes not everyone has to agree, and not everyone will. Many times, the actual disagreements and conversations that arise in the media will prove to be more beneficial to moving forward than solely looking to understand one side.

Moreover, teen voices are crucial for ensuring that policies and narratives reflect the realities and futures of younger generations. Political decisions made today—spanning from economic policy to educational reform—will shape their futures more than anyone else's. Therefore, their opinions should be heard and respected. Youth activists such as Greta

Thunberg, Malala Yousafzai, Aretha Brown, and Amika George, who fight for a plethora of causes such as educational, feminist, and climate rights, are just a few of the teenagers who have shown that when teens are empowered to speak up, real change can follow. They disprove the notion that age defines leadership capacity.

Unfortunately, youth voices in the media are often discredited and dismissed as naive or uninformed. This mindset not only undermines concerns but also perpetuates a cycle of superiority and exclusion in policy-making and public discourse. However, many teen activists today have shown perseverance despite these challenges, and activists like the ones mentioned earlier inspire future generations to fight for the causes that they believe in.

In all, teen voices are essential to the political and global conversations we are having today. They can present hope, initiation, humanity, and urgency into a society that sometimes overlooks the value of these traits within public discourse. By listening to and acknowledging teen voices and opinions in the media, our society can move forward towards a future that benefits us all.

Student Reporter

Building Culture and Leadership at Hanbit Korean School



Kristine Park  
Grade 10  
Del Norte High School

Every Saturday morning, San Diego Hanbit Korean School welcomes hundreds of students into its classrooms, where lessons begin at 8 a.m. and last until noon. The classes range in grades, having students from kindergarten to 7th grade. But during these four hours, students learn more than reading, writing, and speaking Korean. Hanbit Korean School's mission is to raise appreciation for Korean culture, and this includes exposure to Korean arts, music, and history. Over the past semester, students not only improved their fluency in speaking, reading, and writing Korean, but they also participated in a variety of cultural enrichment activities that helped deepen their understanding of Korean heritage.

One of the standout programs this year was the traditional art class centered around creating *minhwa*, traditional Korean folk paintings known for their bright colors and animated scenes. Led by art teacher Song Mi Ri, every student had the opportunity to create their own *minhwa* artwork, choosing from motifs like tigers, peonies, cranes, and geese. In addition to learning how to paint, students also had the opportunity to learn traditional



The students, led by director Kim Yun Sun, perform at the 36th Children's Song Choir Contest held at Irvine's Bethel Church. [Source: Author, Kristine Park]

to learn traditional Korean percussion instruments, specifically the *buk*. They learned basic rhythmic patterns and even learned how to play along with contemporary songs.

This year, the students also went to the 36th Children's Song Choir Contest to compete with 11 other schools. To prepare for this, they took extensive choir lessons with choir director Kim Yun Sun. They rehearsed singing the harmonies, synchronized the dancing, and also prepared an entertaining small skit. Accompanied by violinist Abigail Kang, cellist Elliot Yang, percussionist Aric Lim, and accompanist Eun-



Student volunteers Lauren Lim and Kosu Seol (left to right) work with a student during class at San Diego Hanbit Korean School. [Source: Author, Kristine Park]

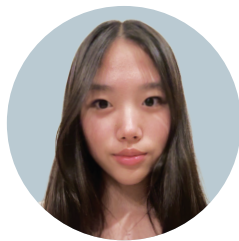
ju Lee, the students set the stage for an energetic and emotional performance. With a large group of supporters from families and friends, the students performed at Irvine's Bethel Church, and gave the audience a spectacular performance that was entertaining and moving, and were awarded the silver medal.

But not only does San Diego Hanbit Korean School offer education for students, it also has an impact on teachers. With 17 volunteers in a range of diverse classes, Hanbit Korean School offers a valuable volunteer experience with hands-on teaching. Lauren Lim, a sophomore at Mt. Carmel

High School, describes her experience at Hanbit. "It's taught me to be more patient, and I think I've really grown in terms of my leadership and instructional skills." Similarly, sophomore Cala Ko at Canyon Crest Academy adds, "It gives me a wider perspective of the impact of learning in different environments, and I enjoyed having conversations with students and learning a bit more about each student every week." For many volunteers, Hanbit Korean School has been an eye-opening experience. It motivates them to grow not only as teachers but as mentors, leaders, and members of a wider cultural community.

Student Reporter

Experiencing and Celebrating Korean Culture Up Close



Emily Lee  
Grade 10  
Sunny Hills High School

Melodic singing, coordinated dancing, and nonstop energy. This night had me on the edge of my seat from start to finish.

On Saturday, April 19th, the Korean Culture Club at my school hosted their 13th annual Korean Culture Night, which is an event where members of the club participate in a variety of Korean performances, both traditional and modern. I attended because my Korean class teacher promised extra credit to anyone who came. What I thought would be a boring show that I would have to painfully sit through turned out to be an unforgettable experience.

One of the first acts in the event was a traditional fan dance, and it was simply breathtaking. The performers moved gracefully and with finesse, waving their fans and creating flowing, flower-like patterns. I had seen videos of this dance before online, but seeing it in person was a whole different experience. I could not believe that students my age were so talented and able to pull off such a surreal performance.

The traditional drum dances followed, and the atmosphere completely shifted. The energy was intense as the loud and powerful drums filled the room. The

performers used large drums and synchronized their movements, creating rhythms that I could not only hear but feel in my chest.

In between the performances, a projector played music videos that students in the Korean classes had created. It was fun to see some of my friends in the clips, but at the same time, I realized the amount of effort that they put in. Watching these videos was a nice break from the on-stage singing and dancing, and it allowed me to gain more respect for those who dedicate so much of their time to delivering entertaining content.

Later, the event shifted to more modern performances, with K-pop dance covers and singing acts. The dancers moved with precision and style, perfectly matching the choreography from the original music videos. All these students performed live, and their unwavering confidence as they danced and sang in front of such a large audience was inspiring.

Of these acts, my favorite was when a band performed the Wave to Earth song, "Love," near the show's end. After the upbeat music, especially from the K-pop groups, listening to the soft tunes



Performers gather in a circle and raise their fans to replicate a bright pink flower during Korean Culture Night. [Source: Sunny Hills Korean Culture Club]

of this song helped me wind down and finish on a peaceful note. The main singer had such a captivating and soothing voice that made me applaud until the very end.

Overall, Korean Culture Night helped me feel more connected to a culture that I have often taken for granted. It reminded me that

culture is not just about history or language, but about the people, the passion, and the pride. Walking out of those doors, I felt reconnected to my roots, and I look forward to attending next year with a different mindset and a stronger appreciation for the Korean community.



Student Reporter

The True Price of Prom Night



Ellie Kim  
Grade 10  
Portola High School



A closer look at the elegant touches that reflect the preparation behind prom night. [Source: Megumi Chang]

Prom is a rite of passage for every high school student. However, with the rising costs of everyday life, prom tickets and other key items needed to prepare for the event are also becoming more expensive. This article will explore how much high school students spend on proms and how much



Two seniors posing for their prom picture—all smiles! [Source: Megumi Chang]

money is really needed to get the full experience. Although prom is usually on a weekend night, prom prep can take anywhere from a week to a night in advance. Many students enjoy getting their nails, hair, and/or makeup done professionally for the occasion. However,

the truth is that not all of those details are needed to have the perfect prom night. For example, many do their own hair and makeup shortly before prom, and some also prefer more affordable press-on nails, as opposed to salon treatments. For many students, the one purchase they consider vital for prom night is the perfect outfit. For guys, whether it's a full suit with a tailored blazer and tie or just a simple dress shirt with dress pants, or dresses for girls, the cost can range anywhere from \$50 to thousands of dollars. It is important to note that prom outfits do not have to be expensive to be stylish. With enough time and effort, students can still create a standout prom outfit without breaking the bank. Although many spend a lot of time preparing for prom, the real spending often starts the night of the event. For instance, transportation can be very expensive: some students may choose to have a limo or a huge party bus to take the entire group, while others opt for carpooling with friends. Another major expense is

prom dinners. Many students see going out to dinner with friends before the event as a vital part of any school dance. This can add up quickly, since many prefer going to a fancy restaurant to match the fancy dance they will be attending. However, this isn't ever necessary. Many also prefer grabbing food at a fast food joint or simply find dinner before prom completely unnecessary. In addition, although the ticket can be bought in advance, typically for cheaper, some students purchase tickets at the door. Depending on the school, tickets may start from under \$100 to several hundred dollars. The only truly necessary purchase to attain the full prom experience is the ticket itself. Everything else, from the fancy outfit and hair to the party bus, is optional. Although it is easy to get caught up in the social pressures to spend heavily on prom preparations or the night of, prom is meant to mark the transition of teenagers into adulthood. With a determined heart and loving friends, enjoying prom is just as expensive, or as affordable, as the cost of a ticket.

Student Reporter

Echo Park Celebrates Earth Fest 2.0



Jane Yoon  
Grade 9  
Larchmont Charter School

On Saturday, April 26, El Centro Del Pueblo in Echo Park, California, hosted Earth Fest 2.0, a vibrant community event that celebrated sustainability, creativity, and local action. From a neighborhood clean-up to live performances and hands-on activities, the event brought people of all ages together, united around one common goal: taking care of our planet. The day started with a community clean-up organized in partnership with the Los Angeles Mayor, Karen Bass' office. Volunteers grabbed gloves and trash bags and worked together to make Echo Park cleaner and greener. After that, the event transitioned into a festival with music, workshops, and booths from local organizations. There was something for everyone—whether you were interested in climate action, art, or just wanted to enjoy the food and performances. One of the booths that stood out was run by Help On The Go, a local non-profit organization. They set up a tile-painting and mosaic station, where anyone could sit down, decorate a tile



At the Help on the Go booth, visitors painted Earth Day tiles to add to a community mosaic. [Source: Author, Jane Yoon]

with paint or glass pieces, and contribute to a collaborative art piece. The goal was to create a mosaic that reflects the community's shared values around promoting a healthier and greener global climate. It was amazing to see children, teens, and adults

all adding their creative touches. Some drew flowers, while others painted animals or simple messages like "peace" and "green earth." It really showed how art can bring people together, even for something as big as climate change.

Throughout the day, there were also elaborate performances and educational activities. The Bob Baker Marionette Theater gave a lively puppet show that had the crowd laughing and clapping. NK Dance Studio gave an energetic performance that had everyone cheering—their moves were sharp, fun to watch, and full of personality. Other booths include free compost demonstrations and instructions on how to garden at home. The event was co-hosted by State Senator Maria Elena Durazo, and local leaders like Assembly-member Caloza also showed up to support. Their presence made it clear that environmental issues are not just personal: they're political and community-wide. Overall, Echo Park Earth Fest 2.0 was a chance for people to extend their understanding about sustainability, connect with local organizations, and get involved in hands-on activities. Whether it was picking up trash, painting a tile, or watching a live performance, there were plenty of ways for the community to take part and have fun, all while supporting a good cause.

Student Reporter

Chemistry Meets Creativity at LAUSD's 2025 STEAM Fest



David Ha  
Grade 11  
Science Academy  
STEM Magnet

While both STEM and STEAM are used in schools, STEAM is increasingly gaining popularity as a more comprehensive approach towards education. STEAM adds "Arts" to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), incorporating creative elements into the traditional educational curriculum. This broadened approach aims to foster more holistic learning and prepare students for the diverse demands of the 21st century. The integration of the arts into STEM learning has allowed educators to expand the benefits of hands-on education and collaboration in a variety of ways, promoting both creativity and curiosity. STEAM education aims to develop students to become innovators, thus, integrating a child's creativity while also developing their technical skills. On April 26, 2025, I participated in LAUSD Region West's second annual STEAM Festival held at Los Angeles High School. I had a chance to present a hands-on activity booth with Hollywood High School's Principal, Mr. Dovlatian, and one of the school coordinators, Ms. Shen. We presented a hands-on experiment combining painting with chemistry, utilizing Leucomethylene Blue. The Leucomethylene Blue solution is created from methylene blue, a dye used in labs to visualize cells; ascorbic acid, or vitamin c,

commonly found in oranges; and water. The combining process of creating the solution which goes from a rich dark blue to a translucent color is known as a reduction reaction. Participants are first instructed to create a painting with the provided paint and water. Once completed, the paintings are taken to be sprayed with the translucent Leucomethylene Blue solution. As participants begin noticing the blue tint arising on their drawings, the process of oxidation is explained. Once dried, the paintings are laminated and later returned to the artist. This hands-on experiment was a way to show how art can be utilized to convey complex topics to a younger audience, a successful event with hundreds of students and families painting while also learning about the beauty of the oxidation process. This event also included many other interactive booths presented by LAUSD schools showcasing their STEAM knowledge in various fields including robotics, art exhibits, performances and other interactive activities. Despite the rain, many families from neighboring communities attended and participated in the showcased interactive STEAM activities. While hosting my booth, I was given the opportunity to interview Local District West Regional Administrator of Instruction, An-

drew Jenkins, who organized this STEAM Fest. According to Mr. Jenkins, the main goal for holding the annual STEAM Fest is to "Highlight all the amazing work LAUSD schools are doing with their students in science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics, and the engagement students have with them. Another goal of STEAM Fest is, "To connect with STEAM partners, who work with LAUSD schools to elevate steam subjects in schools." But, Jenkins says the main purpose is, "To really bring awareness that discipline is important to a child's education and development, and help students see all the possibilities they can develop in STEAM fields." Then Mr. Jenkins shared his own story of receiving a combined degree from the University of Florida in both the arts and mathematics. His favorite subject however, is still mathematics, he says because of "It's beautiful discipline, encouragement of creativity, and collaboration." He further emphasizes "the importance of thinking divergently in mathematics as a mathematician", and said he wishes to provide a space for students to think divergently in the mathematics field as well. Alberto M. Carvalho, the Superintendent of LAUSD, stopped by our booth. After I gave an explanation of the process of the Leucomethylene Blue experi-



Alberto M. Carvalho(second from the right), the Superintendent of LAUSD, stopped by our booth. [Source: Author, David Ha]

ment, he then informed me that he attended Florida International University obtaining his degree in chemistry. He says this Leucomethylene experiment is a great way to introduce complex concepts at an elementary level. Once again, LAUSD's annual STEAM Fest was not only a success for the Los Angeles community, but also a great experience for me. Hosting a booth where students learned an early introduction on Oxidation and Reduction reactions, while also having fun. This event represents the potential for art in science fields, which is great for captivating the interests of kids, both creatively and educationally. Getting to speak with Mr. Carvalho as well as Mr. Jenkins and getting to know more about Los Angeles Unified educational leaders was also a pleasure.